The Ties that Bind ...: Patronage and Marriage in Fifteenth-Century Century Letter Collections

by

T. Tolga Gümüş

A thesis submitted to the Institute for Graduate Studies in Economics and Social Sciences, in Bilkent University, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in History

Ankara,
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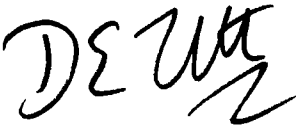

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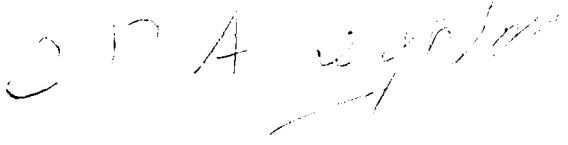

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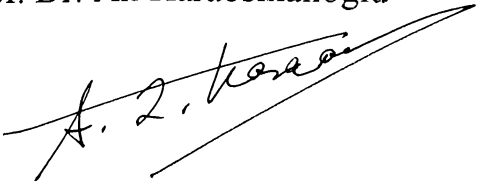

Abstract

This thesis investigates the service and patronage relationship and family and marriage practices of gentry and lesser nobility in later medieval England in the light of Stonor letters and papers and Paston letters. This study suggests that service-patronage relationship on the one hand, and family and marriage practices on the other gave the society an order of its own. In addition to the history of the Stonor and Paston families, the significance of letter collections as primary sources is discussed. The service and patronage relationships and family and marriage practices of gentry and lesser nobility families of the later medieval England are also investigated.

Özet

Bu tez 15. Yüzyıl İngiltere'sinde alt ve orta aristokratik sınıfın evlilik, aile, hizmet ve himaye konularını incelemektedir. İncelemede Stonor ve Paston ailelerinin mektup ve kayıtlı belgeleri birincil kaynak olarak kullanılmıştır. Çalışmada ortaya konulan temel yukarıda saydığım özelliklerin topulma kendine özgü bir düzen sağlamış olduğudur. Çalışma dört bölümden oluşmaktadır. Birinci bölüm birincil kaynakları incelemektedir. İkinci Bölüm hizmet ve himaye ilişkisini incelemektedir. Üçüncü bölüm evlilik ve aile ilişkisini incelemektedir. Dördüncü bölüm sonuç bölümüdür.

Abbreviations

Harl. : Horrox, Rosemary, ed., *British Library Harleian Manuscript 433, 3 vols*, (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited, 1979)

PL. Gairdner, James, ed., *The Paston Letters 1422-1509 A.D. 4 vols*, (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1910)

SLP. : Carpenter, Christine, ed., *Kingsford's Stonor Letters and Papers*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992)

Contents

Chapter I:
Introduction

The society of later medieval English nobility was unique in many respects. It had a service and patronage relationship of its own and complicated marriage and family structures which were very different than those of today. In this study, I will analyse these social institutions.

Chapter 1, is a general introduction to the subject plus a discussion about the nature of the relevant primary sources, gentry correspondence, especially Stonor letters and papers and Paston letters and a brief discussion of Stonor and Paston families. Chapter 2 deals with the service and patronage relationship as the primary cause in the creation of affinities. Power and the demonstration of it in every circumstance was the basic characteristic of later medieval English nobility class. In this chapter, I will also suggest that the society of the age had a hierarchical order and, for this reason, it was quite natural for this society to produce service and patronage relationships in a well-established way. Moreover, the service and patronage relationship was the dominant ethics of the age and that this particular relationship had a significant impact on the politics of the period. In addition, chapter 2 deals with the functionality of the service and patronage relationship because as well as being a means for power demonstration, this relationship was functional for both parts that is to say for master and for the servant. The master needed his service to be done, and servant expected to gain some benefits in return. Lastly, by means of this network of service and patronage relationship that later medieval English society gained an order of its own.

In chapter 3, I will discuss family and marriage practices of the age. There are various forms of marriage in the later medieval English nobility. Some made marriages based on romance, and others made marriages of status or welfare. However, the basic social characteristic of the age was still current for the marriage practice of the society. Worldly advancement in either material form or in status were the most frequent aims of the fifteenth-century English gentry. Moreover, similar to service and patronage relationship, family structures and marriage practices also gave the society an order. Later medieval English noble families gave the utmost importance to the marriage of their children. Usually, decisions such as to whom their children were to marry, and the economic and social position of the candidates, were analysed in minute detail. The family structure of later medieval England also had a unique character. The origins of the English nuclear-family structure can be seen at the beginning of fifteenth century and, yet at the same time, the meaning of family was quite different than that of today. In certain circumstances, some servants of noble families were regarded as members of the family. The nobleman would call his servant his son. People of later medieval England had two families. The first one being the family of blood and the other, the family of marriage. In this circumstance, the politics of the day affected families. Married children found themselves in a dilemma as to which family they should prefer. Because in some circumstances, different families may have belonged to different affinities. In some cases, the importance loyalty to affinity gained over the importance over loyalty to families of blood as usually, married children preferred the side of their family of marriage.

Finally, in chapter 4, I will make some general considerations underlying the importance of power and power distribution for the later medieval English nobility.

Obviously, the primary sources on which I base my general discussions have to be analysed. I start with an analysis of them, I analyse gentry correspondence as primary sources, particularly, Stonor letters and papers as well as Paston letters, Plumpton correspondence, and the Harleian Manuscript 433.

LETTERS AS PRIMARY SOURCES:

People write letters for a wide variety of reasons. They write letters for request, for information, for remembrance, and for various other affairs. After all, whatever the type of the letter may have been (ie, e-mails, or whatever), people wrote letters in the past, they are writing letters today, and they will continue to write in the future. To write letters comes from the need for expression as well as the need for information. As is the case in every human act and thought, letters are also of immense value either for people to whom they are written, or for historians aiming to understand the thoughts and feelings of the past societies. Like many other documents, they bring to today, fragmentary signs of human content. Letters are also narratives: since they were created by human beings, they should be so. As every narrative has a human content, letters have that content too.[1]

Letters have also both positive and negative sides, being advantages and disadvantages for the historian whose job is to reconstruct the past. Most fundamentally, letters are the expressions of human thoughts and wishes in direct or indirect form.[2] They may be direct, if the expected receiver of the letter is an informal friend of the sender of the letter; and they may be indirect, if the relationship between the sender and the

[1] For a fine analysis of the nature of narratives and their importance in human life, see: Keith Jenkins, *Postmodern History Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

expected receiver of the letter is formal or official.[3] Thus, in the first instance, we can most probably find very sincere and correct information about some intriguing events; while on the other hand, in the letters of the second group, the information given may mislead us, since, the relationship in the latter is formal, and that people writing letters may not be correct or sincere in their sayings for a variety of reasons.

Every written document is somehow valuable and important for playing major or minor roles in explaining some events. Historical documents, whatever their type may have been, are not exceptional. Thus, like every written document, letters are also important to understand the lives of past societies. The specific importance of letters as primary source comes from their basic property as 'particular' written documents: they were related to two particular persons and usually no one else. They were not open to public inspection in their time. They were usually written by one person to another person. Thus, there was at least a degree of privacy and a high degree of freedom of speech, because in theory, only the receiver was expected to read that letter and learn the particular feeling or information of a particular person.

As for our particular examples, their specific value is also important. The Stonor letters and papers are one of the only three surviving archives of gentry family correspondence of fifteenth-century England. For this reason, their value is indispensible. For this period, it is not usual to find informal writings, such as letters, because only formal documentation survived until our time since their security was important for many

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[2] *Kingsford's Stonor Letters and Papers*, ed. by Christine Carpenter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. ix.

[3] Many examples of both types of letters can be found in any collection of correspondence. Stonor Letters and papers or Paston letters or Plumpton correspondence are not exceptional.

people.[4] This is also valid for even monarchs and nobles. In this respect, the Stonor letters and papers give us detailed, unofficial and informal information about lives of gentry families of England of the later medieval period. It is also worth stating that most of the letters in Stonor and Paston correspondences were written in English not in Latin. This shows their informality. Without the surviving collections of private letters in general, and Stonor letters in particular, it is completely impossible to learn about interesting details of gentry life.

How would it have been possible to write a history of service without referring to fifteenth-century correspondences? How for example would a study of marriage have been incomplete without the sayings of Paston Letters and Plumpton correspondence? How would the impact of specific law cases to the daily life of individuals have been examined without them? Importance of Stonor letters is best illustrated by the following quotation from Christine Carpenter:

> The Stonor Letters and Papers are a unique survival: nowhere else in the source of medieval English history do we find such a substantial collection of family papers, including a large number of letters, from a family which still exists, still living in the same house, a house where the successive stages of improvement under the Medieval Stonors back to the fourteenth century can be traced. Moreover, if there has been a single transformation in the study of late-medieval English history in the past quarter of the century, it has been the 'discovery' of the group to which the Stonors belonged, the late-medieval gentry.[5]

Technically, their compositional form was usually well-established, starting with formulaic words of respect and words of love and ending with words of wishes to

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[4] *SLP.*, p. xxii.
[5] Ibid., p. ix.

the receiver. In most of the letters, the starting phrases of 'my most belovyd meister' or 'friende', and the following respect words such as 'I recoummende me unto yow' or 'as ... as I cane' are very frequent, so frequent that one necessarily thinks that gentry families got some form of formal and unique education about that type of writings. This usage, as I believe, implies a firm basis for the existence of a probable coherence and conspiracy between the members of the fifteenth-century English gentry class, because, without such coherence and conspiracy, there would not have been such a regularly repeated words from different gentry members. It can be suggested that there was a well-established writing routine of the period of the gentry class. As every cultural routine implies at least a degree of coherence and class consciousness, the frequent acceptance of these formal expressions are also important to note in understanding the degree of class consciousness of later medieval England.

The Stonor and Paston letters allows us to understand the daily experiences and major concerns of gentry family at this time. In writing social history, their value is even greater,[6] because in most social histories, the information is focused in informal documents instead of formal ones, and because in formal documents, we rarely see events concerning social relationships between individuals and between different groups of society. Kingsford, the first editor of the Stonor papers, was well aware of their importance. Thus, he claimed: 'though they lack the political interest which is so marked a characteristic of the more celebrated collections, in all that is of value for the social life

[6] In fact, one really thinks that the value of the letters does not come from their intrinsic value but from the interpreters' highest skills of interpreting them coherently and wisely, because their informing content is directly related with the interpreters' skill to interpret the information available in the letters.

of the time they do not fall short'.[7] He also claimed that they give information about the areas of local office, estate management, legal business, social and domestic life, marriage, dealings with neighbours and kinsmen.[8]

The importance of local history and social history has been re-evaluated in contemporary history writing.[9] Contemporary historians are much more interested with social life and the social dynamics of the past societies. The fashion for dealing with micro-scale events is also at its peak. Thus, local history and social history are two rising aspects of the new understanding of history. Accordingly, Carpenter suggested that:

> One important aspect of the local study has been the redefinition of social history. No longer a by-way for the intellectually feeble, social history has become integral to the way history is done. The social history of the political classes is recognised as essential to political history, and the local study, with its concentration on a relatively small section of political society, is a peculiarly effective means of painting a portrait in the round of this society and its constituents... What the Stonor letters now to offer is therefore an almost unrivalled insight into the social mores of the fifteenth-century gentry.[10]

The Stonor letters are more valuable than the Paston letters for interpreting the daily life of a typical gentry family because the Pastons were relatively newcomers to gentry society, while the Stonors were more firmly established gentry family. Furthermore, the Paston family's region of East Anglia was relatively more troubled than

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[7] *SLP.*, p. 11.
[8] Ibid., p. 11.
[9] Ibid., p. 17.
[10] Ibid., p. 17.

Stonors region of the Thames Valley. Thus, Paston letters are less representative than Stonor letters.[11]

In addition to the above point, as Carpenter suggested, in the Stonor Letters and papers, noble power is not so much a dominant theme and that conflict and violence are more apparent and, thus, they present a different picture of the fifteenth-century English gentry life.[12] In this respect, it is possible to suggest that these two different sets of gentry correspondence supply unparallelled information about the same phenomena, namely the gentry life of later medieval England, and for this reason, the existence of Stonor Letters may led to re-evaluation of the basic well-known facts about the period.

The Stonor Letters and papers, unlike the Paston letters or Plumpton Correspondence, give us the impression that people of gentry families were going about in their daily business without the disturbance of the Wars of the Roses.[13] One possible reason for this difference between these correspondences may be that the geographical region of these three different gentry families were different and that the Wars of the Roses led to severe disturbances in one region while leaving the other region intact; and, in the last analysis, affecting some gentry families badly and giving to another group of gentry families relatively advantageous position in a state of war. Prior to the examination of Stonor Letters, it was believed that the Wars of the Roses affected the gentry families negatively, but it is now seen that it was not the case for every part of England.[14] Thus, the importance of local history and that of gentry correspondences are obvious.

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[11] Ibid., p. 14.
[12] Ibid., p. 11.
[13] Ibid., p. 18.
[14] See for example, ibid., pp. 18-29.

The informative content of the letter collections is highly diverse and people were free to express their real feelings over various issues.[15] In the collections of letters, there are various types of information. The lives of gentry, the careers of the members of the families, their relationships with their servants, and with their opponent families can all be witnessed in these letters. The Stonor collection of letters differs in scope very widely. Here, are love letters, household accounts, greeting letters, letters of request, letters of advice, letters of recommendation of someone, letters of order from the queen, letters concerning law cases, and letters giving information about some particular events occurring in remote areas. Most of these letters have not been used in historical analyses, but, in the long run, their value will hopefully be understood by the historians.

Today, for historians, the most important tools for reconstructing the past are written documents of every kind. Without them the science of history is not possible at all. Every written document has some value in order to interpret and analyse an event. For history the case is not different. Every written document is historically important since it may shed light on a dark region of a historical period. The letter collections, or even a single letter, may lead to a better evaluation of the past; or, it may even change fundamentally our well-established views of the past, as is the case for the emergence of the Stonor letters and papers. The particular importance of letters is more evident when

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[15] But even there had been such a freedom, their cautious tone in expressing their thoughts are also important to note. One reason for this, may be that the collection of letters and papers among the gentry families was a quite well-established tradition, and that this tradition alarmed the members of the gentry families in not being so honest since there was always the possibility that a letter may have been seen by an unwanted person in anytime. As Christine Carpenter suggested, the available gentry correspondences of today are a small part of a huge iceberg, and that most of them have gone away by the habit of putting family archives into the fire in the nineteenth century. (Ibid., p. 21.) Thus, this 'habit' may imply that there was also another habit, namely the habit of collecting letters and even in some cases using them as evidences for some facts.

one tries to write social history, and more particularly local social history or the history of a family. People used letters for many different purposes. Therefore, their historical importance cannot be reduced to a single topic. Since history deals with every human deed in the past, the importance of letters are valid for every type of historical study. A economic historian may investigate the letters collections because he may find in these collections useful information concerning economic relationships of gentry families. A legal historian may deal with them because in these letters there are various information about the law and legal proceedings in general and in particular. Thus, every historian dealing with every part of human existence of fifteenth-century England may find value in these three surviving gentry correspondences. However, for this particular study, the difficulty after all still remains in showing each of the above-mentioned types of relationships by referring to my primary sources as in my primary sources it is sometimes impossible to find examples demonstrating all forms of above mentioned facts. But some investigation of secondary source material reveals them. Thus, the basic problem of this study is to fail partially in making effective bridges between information retrieved from secondary source material and primary sources to be used as evidence. In some points thus, necessary support of primary source may not be available for supporting data on secondary sources.

THE STONORS and PASTONS:

The history of Stonor family starts with John Stonor in Thames Valley where the Stonor Family still lives today.[16] Little is known about John Stonor, the eldest member of the Stonor family. He was an attorney and, as it has been suggested, being an attorney was a profitful practice in 1300s.[17] The advantage of being an attorney was that in those days land problems between noble families were very frequent and it enabled to gain money or even lands. [18] Unfortunately, there is no evidence on how much the family acquired in this period with the aid of John's profession. The year 1382 marked the beginning of troubled times for the Stonors.[19] In this year Edmund Stonor died and, until 1415, the family had no mature man to manage their lands and property efficiently. Despite this misfortune, this period did not become a disaster for the family. During the upheavals of 1386-9 and 1397-1400, the Stonor family avoided to take sides.[20] This was perhaps, their one of the best if not the most significant achievement. The period was a time of constant conflict and warfare, and the Stonor family managed to survive these conflicts successfully. In addition, Thomas I was perhaps one of the most skillful person for using service and patronage relationship for the good of the family. From the 1415s onwards, Thomas I was mature and for the family it was time to go one step further, because, he was very close to Thomas Chaucer who was one of the main local power-brokers.[21] This person had connections with royal administration. Chaucer's patron was Henry

[16] Ibid., pp. 8-11.
[17] Ibid., p. 4.
[18] Ibid., p. 5.
[19] Ibid., p. 5.
[20] Ibid., p. 6.
[21] Ibid., p. 6.

Beaufort.[22] Moreover, the wife of Thomas, was heiress of Robert Hallum, who was bishop of Salisbury and one of the formal royal clerk.[23] Apart from this, William de la Pole, first duke of Suffolk married Chaucer's heiress and became one of the greatest powers in the Thames Valley as well as in East Anglia.[24] Furthermore, if it is true, as it seems to be so, Thomas II married a daugter of the duke, and an affinity of Chaucer and Beaufort had been established. The Stonors, thus, were able to maintain and even improve their local status by means of these connections with important people.[25]

On the other hand, these connections created the possibility of danger, especially from 1450s onwards, because during these years the family had a connection with Edmund Hampden, who was linked to the court and that he was first sent in exile in Tewkesbury, and he was killed there on behalf of Henry VI.[26] However, the family achieved to prevent any damage from either side. Afer all, their most striking achievement was their ability to survive in troubled periods. The family did not participate to the Wars of the Roses, and this was perhaps their best decision. They did not get any harm from the consequences of the war. The family still lives in their former place and in their former house. The Stonor letters and papers are from their private collection. There are still some other letters and papers in the family archive and these letters are not yet open to public inspection.

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[22] Ibid., p. 8.
[23] Ibid., p. 10.
[24] Ibid., p. 13.
[25] Here, Carpenter refers to Thomas Stonor, *The history of Stonor Family* (London, 1976). Ibid., p. 14, the sources have to be evaluated carefully.
[26] *SLP*, p. 13.

The Pastons claimed that their origin was a Norman ancestor.[27] This may be true or false, but their emergence as a significant family in English history occurs towards the end of the fourteenth century. The first significant member of the family was Clement Paston who earned his living as a farmer in his own land. The rise of the family was by means of the efforts of this person. Similar to the Stonor family, the Pastons too enjoyed the advantage of having an attorney in their family. William, the son of Clement, was sent to school by relentless efforts of his father, and he succeeded to become an attorney.[28] At a young age, in early twenties, John Paston had to take control of the family since his father Willam died.[29] By the death of William, the attorney, the difficulties for Paston family started. The first of these difficulties was a land problem with their opponent family Parsons.[30] Since there was no longer an attorney in the family, the Parsons immediately attacked to the family. The most important of these land disputes was over the manor of Gresham which was a property of Pastons. As a must of the age, this problem had to be solved by means of stronger family friends. John Paston, however young, tried to set up connections with William Waynflete, the bishop of Winchester to solve the problem.[31] Unfortunately, the problem became more complicated for a variety of reasons.[32] Then came the trouble with the famous Fastolf's will.[33] The Pastons claimed that Sir James Fastolf gave his big fortune to the Paston family.[34]

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[27] H. S. Benett, *The Pastons and Their England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 1.
[28] For a detailed story of what father Clement did for the good of his son William, see: ibid., pp. 2-6.
[29] Ibid., p. 4
[30] Ibid., p. 4.
[31] Ibid., p.5.
[32] for a detailed analysis see: Ibid., pp. 5-8.
[33] Ibid., pp. 7-8.
[34] See for example: Ibid., p.20.

Unfortunately, problems followed upon problems for this unfortunate fortune. The fortune brought the family not welfare but many enemies. One of them was Lord Molynes who, on 28th January 1450, attacked the family house of Pastons in Gresham when John Paston was absent.[35] Unlike the Stonors, the Pastons failed to set up effective connections; or, perhaps they choose the wrong side. John Paston, at an early age, became one of the servants of Richard Neville, the Kingmaker. The Wars of the Roses was a disaster for the family.

Despite their relatively short historical period, the Paston correspondence as a collection is bigger and thus, richer in historical information, than Stonor letters and papers and, mostly for this reason, the Paston Letters became more influencial on later medieval English historiography. For this reason, I have primarily attempted to find evidence in Stonor collection. After all, they are not so much used by various historians in various times. In some parts of my study, some support from Harleian Manuscript 433 and Plumpton correspondence had been necessary for some comparisons in especially chapter 3.[36]

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[35] Ibid., p.7.

[36] *British Library Harleian Manuscript 433, 3 vols*, ed. by Rosemary Horrox (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited, 1979), and *The Plumpton Letters and Papers*, ed. by Joan Kirby (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

Chapter II
Service and Patronage

Introduction:

In this chapter, I will examine the service and patronage relationship and fifteenth-century noble affinities in the later medieval English gentry families as has been outlined by historians for royal and noble households in the light of the contemporary gentry correspondence, especially that of the Stonors and Pastons. First I shall consider the noble affinities.

Later Medieval English society was composed of social alliances known as affinities.[37] Basically, affinities were the alliances between the members of English noble families in order to get stronger positions towards their counterparts. The gentry was well aware of the fact that a single, that is to say independent, nobleman would not easily acquire stronger political position within society if he was unable to get support of any other nobleman. Richard, duke of Gloucester took the throne with the help of his fellows.[38] Would it have been possible for him to do so without any help? Noble affinity was important at that time. Therefore, the most natural question comes to the mind: how did the affinities between the members of fifteenth-century English aristocracy emerge? What was the reasons behind this institution? Was it a simple phenomenon or had it a complex structure? Did the service and patronage relationship affect its creation? What was the particular political understanding of the time? Why was glamour so important

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[37] These affinities were the noble affinities and for a detailed discussion about their nature, see: Rosemary Horrox, *Richard III, A Study in Service* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp. 10-21.

and how it had to be acquired? Briefly, how did later medieval English society evolve? In this chapter I shall suggest that the emergence of noble affinities of the fifteenth century owed much to the service and patronage practice of the preceding period. Starting from kings' practice and continuing from its functional nature, the service and patronage relationship determined the politics of the age very deeply. On the other hand, the form of service and patronage relationship was also affected by the power-politics of the age. The reasons for these two points were, firstly, that society was in need of order and that the service and patronage relationship gave that order to the society, and secondly, the age was a period of glamour and fame in the form of demonstration of power and that masters saw their worth in their household servants and servants found their worth in the worth of their masters.[39] These points outline the general characteristics of the society with a variety of exceptions.

Order, glamour, splendour, worship of a man, affinities, hierarchy, household, service, and patronage are the basis of fifteenth century English gentry. When all comes together they constitute the basis of the society of later medieval England. Politics of the time was affected from and usually oriented by the above dynamics. The ultimate aim of the nobility of fifteenth century of England was to keep the order in the society. Because order was for their own benefit. They usually tried to maintain this order by using the service and patronage relationship. The emergence of this social structure may be because of the particular needs of the society or nobility and aristocracy may just impose this order. Both statements may be correct or incorrect. In fact whatever the *leitmotiv* behind the society may have been, there was a particular type of relationship

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[38] This claim is suggested and supported by Horrox in *Richard III*, pp. 27-33.
[39] Ibid., pp. 8-11.

which, historians would later called service and patronage relationship. This relationship was unique for its time.

Service and Patronage in 15th-Century England:

Fifteenth-century English society was unique in the sense that society was largely built up on the basis of a hierarchical order of service and patronage relationship. While generalisation is dangerous, strictly speaking, patronage meant domination and sovereignty of a lord over another lesser lord or a person or a group of people of the commonalty for the lord's personal benefits being either political or social in the broadest sense;[40] and service meant the general term for what the lesser people undertook to fulfil their master's wishes was furnished by the petitioner either being a lesser lord or a man of common people in the hope of yielding some benefit such as explicit or implicit support of his lord in a law suite or grant of some part of lord's land.[41] This is a rough description of service and patronage relationship. This kind of relationship type was common in the fifteenth century. But what was the reason for its emergence? The simple answer to this question is that some particular needs of the kings necessitated the help of some men probably a noble one in some particular jobs. Thus, this was a royal invention which gradually influenced almost all gentry members.

The first point to be considered is that the service and patronage relationship started from the top and went down penetrating all society.[42] At the centre the king was more or less able to achieve his wishes in this manner. But at the pheriphery, there was

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[40] David Herlihy, *Medieval Households* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), p.11.
[41] Horrox, *Richard III,* pp. 3-4.

mutual power conflict.[43] This form of relationship came from the top, from the relationship between the king and his subjects. There was a variety of activities for which the king needed the help of his subjects. For example, for the administration of his estates, the maintenance of order in a particular area, and in the raising troops for the war, he needed the help of his local subjects.[44] All these tasks had something to do with the local authority of the king. Thus, in order to secure an efficient local authority, the king required the support and help of local notables. These men of local standing had to become the servants as well as the subjects of the king.[45]

While service and patronage relationship in the above sense found its first expression in the relationship between the king and his servers, it did not limit itself to the royal affairs alone.[46] Service of this kind was thus the concern of every people within that society. What can be said about the nature of the service patronage relationship is more or less true for the relationship between local noblemen and their petitioners.[47] Members of gentry families needed similar types of aid from other people. Just as king needed the aid of his servants, so having some similarities with the king in power relationships, the noblemen needed the aid of some other noblemen or some men of commonalty.[48] Thus, the creation of affinities started in this manner. Firstly, there were jobs to be done, and next, these jobs created the ties between some members of gentry

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[42] Herlihy, *Medieval Households,* p. 6.
[43] Horrox, *Richard III,* pp. 24-26.
[44] Ibid., pp. 41-48.
[45] Ibid., pp. 22-38.
[46] Ibid., pp. 51-55.
[47] Ibid., pp. 66-77.
[48]For examples see: Jonathan Dewald, *The European Nobility 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), ch. 3-4.

families and, in some respects, remoteness between some others.[49] Before going further let us consider the very nature of service and patronage relationship.

Lords did not generally buy service in the sense of using patronage to get a particular profit. On the contrary, patronage was often the reward for past service and petitioners took care to determine their claims on their lords.[50] Men who were not within the network of service-patronage relationship felt themselves to be in a disadvantageous position. In these circumstances people tried to show to others that they were in the service of some close kinsmen.[51] Lordship did not imply complete sovereignty over the servants. Good lordship was always important for that time. In fact the word aristocrat itself was derived from the ancient Greek words 'aristo' meaning good, and 'cratos', meaning administrator.[52] Thus, aristocrat implicitly meaning 'good administerer'. Good lordship was not merely an ethical conception, that is to say, fifteenth-century English gentry and nobility needed to be good governors not because of merely ethical considerations, but in order to maintain their prosperous, glamourous and successful lifestyles.[53]

This service and patronage was the fundamental part of the household formation of noblemen.[54] Each servant of a nobleman was a natural household member of that nobleman in question. Members of the aristocracy possessed households in which their servants stayed. This practice of household is also affected by the particular

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[49] For a detailed analysis see: Horrox, *Richard III*, chs. 3-4.
[50] Dewald, *The European Nobility*, pp. 33-45.
[51] For some examples about these kinds of events see: Horrox, *Richard III*, pp. 3-4.
[52] *Essays on Later Medieval England*, ed. by Rosemarry Horrox (Cambridge: Cambridge Uni. Press, 1992), p. 145.
[53] Michael L. Bush, *The English Aristocracy: A Comparative Synthesis* (New Hampshire: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 77.
[54] Dewald, *The European Nobility*, pp. 80-87.

characteristics of the age.[55] We shall see it later, glamour, as a demonstration of power, was the most important basis in determining the form of household of a gentry family.

People of the fifteenth century were different from people of today. Service was the first difference and extreme glamour in every aspect of life as a demonstration of power was another difference of later medieval society. While the political climate was almost in a constant state of war between aristoctrats of the time, the glamour was never neglected. The social climate was also glamourous. As P. M. Kendall stated:

> In an age when the London menage of the Earl of Warwick sometimes consumed six oxen for breakfast and when the kingmaker spread before visiting Bohemian lords a feast of sixty courses, it behooved the king of England to surround himself with a household that expressed the uniquiness of his prerogative. Magnificence exemplified power. The act of resumption of Henry VII's first Parliament anounced, 'your honourable household must be kept and borne worshipfully and honourably, as it accordeth to the honour of your estate and your siad realm, by the which your adversaries and enemies shall fall into the dread wherein heretofore they have been'.[56]

Thus, in later medieval English aristocracy splendour and glamour was a must and it showed a degree of individual power and social status. These facts make the discussions about the shape and size of household of a nobleman more meaningful. As we shall see below, there was a tendency among members of English aristocracy for the construction of as huge a household as possible as a demonstration of power and for a variety of other

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[55] Herlihy, *Medieval Households,* ch. 1-2.

[56] Paul Murray Kendall, *The Yorkist Age, Daily Life During the Wars of the Roses* (London: George Allen: 1962), p. 161.

reasons. In fact, splendour was an essential part of kingship itself. The huge amounts of expenses were thus seen as legitimate. As Sir John Fortescue stated in 1435:

> It shall need that the King have such treasure as he may make new buildings when he will for his pleasure and magnificence, and as he may buy him rich clothes, rich stones, and other jewels and ornaments convenient to his estate royal. And often times he will buy rich hangings and other apparel for his houses and do other such noble and great costs as besitteth his royal majesty. For if a king did not so, nor might do, he lived then not like his estate, but rather in misery, and in more subjection than doth a private person.[57]

From the above, we understand that there were some 'kingly standards', and kings were in a way obliged to match these standards. Unfortunately, King Henry VI was unable to get to this kind of a 'kingly standard'. When his government collapsed during the 1440s and 1450s, and while his lords were becoming increasingly rich by using royal lands for their own benefit, the king himself became gradually poorer. Meanwhile, sergeants and yeomen as well as clerks of the royal household desperately petitioned Parliament for unpaid wages for a long duration of time. In 1449, one year before the rebellion of Jack Cade, the king owed as much as 372,000 pounds. The expenses of his household was 24,000 while the revenues totalled 5000 sterling only.[58] In such hard conditions, inevitably, the tradition of royal household had to disappear. Edward IV ascended the throne in March, 1461, and he developed an economical but splendid court which was based on the premisses of past households but at the same time

[57] Ibid., p. 161.
[58] Ibid., p. 162.

acquired a more sophisticated expression of kingship which would be the basis for the household philosophy of the Later Tudors.[59]

Perhaps, psychological satisfaction of the masses around the king was also important. The amount of money spent on these kinds of activities are very high and the utility the noblemen could acquire from these expenses is open to discussion. Were these expenses really necessary? Or was there a difference in the understanding of 'necessary' for the medieval English society and that of today? I believe the second question is more meaningful. The necessities of the medieval era were definitely different compared to those of today's society.

The quest for a splendourous lifestyle was not essentially different for the gentry families, except of course the amount of money spent on the glamour,[60] with one exception that they were not obliged to do: that is to say, they would not lose their position if they failed to attain their standards, as was the case for the king. But after all, gentry and lesser nobility of later medieval England tried to do their best by showing as much splendour and glamour as possible, because they too were directly enrolled within the political conflicts and that the demonstration of power was important for them.

Naturally, the more money there was to spend, then the greater was the splendour and glamour of the life. Manor houses were similar to the castles in their appearance, as they were moated and walled. For example, the Pastons' manor at Gresham had towers at each corner but the drawbridge was replaced by a causeway and sprays of hedge lined the entry to the house.[61] A century later, Lenand described Sir

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[59] The basic characteristics of that household consturction can be seen in: ibid., pp. 163-66.
[60] Ibid., p. 163.
[61] The description is taken from : ibid., p. 335.

William Stonor's chief seat at Stonor, Oxfordshire, as a 'fair park, and a warren conies, fair woods. The mansion standeth climbing on an hill and hath two courts builded with timber, brick and flint.'[62] In this case, Kendall suggests that the brick portions of the manor house sprang from the building zeal of the first Thomas Stonor who, in the reign of Henry V, bought 200,000 bricks at Crokernend for 40 sterling, paid and 15 sterling to have them carted to Stonor and hired Flemish workmen to lay them.[63]

In fact, in the reign of Edward IV, most of the gentry dwellings were familiar in appearance, but home life during the Yorkist Age became gradually more comfortable, and a larger proportion of the population was able to achieve this comfort.[64] Furniture and architectural ornament were also important for the nobility and gentry of the fifteenth century England. Wall hangings, canopied beds and cupboards displaying plates were important elements of the house for showing their degree of glamour and consequently power and status of the owner. John Paston described the wedding of Edward IV's sister Margaret to Charles of Burgundy at Bruges in a letter to his mother. His expression of wonder is a reflection of the contemporary's mood. 'I have no wit nor remembrance to write to yoe half the worship that is here, as for the Duke's court...I heard nevere of none like to it, save the King Arthur's court'. [65]

The demonstration of power by means of glamour and splendour aimed at increasing one's social prestige. This prestige was an essential. It was a real necessity. So that it did not limit itself to daily life practice. It penetrated in every aspect of life. Wherever there were people of the aristocracy, either higher nobility or lesser aristocracy,

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[62] This description is also given in : ibid., p. 335.
[63] Ibid., p. 335.
[64] Ibid., p. 336.
[65] *PL*, no. 311.

there we could easily find glamour and splendour. Even funeral ceremonies were important expression of status and power. As Kendall stated:

> The funeral expenses of Thomas Stonor amounted to 74 sterling. John Paston's must have been still higher, for he died at an inn in London. A priest and a woman took charge of the bier, and twelve poor men bearing torches walked about the cart as it jolted for six days over the roads from London to Norwich. The little cortege was met outside the city gates by a procession of friars from the foru orders. Dirige was sung at St. Peter's Hungate in the presence of same friars, 38 priests, 39 boys in surplices, 23 sisters from Norman's Hospital, and 26 clerks, as well as the Prioress of Carrow and her maid and an anchoress. Another procession then bore the body to Bromholm Priory, near Paston, where final rites were completed.[66]

Thus, so was the general pattern of behaviour and spending practice of the society of the later medieval England. While generalisation is still difficult, it is apparent that the demonstration and expression of power and status penetrated every behaviour of noble and gentry families. Since the age was the epoch of glamour, status and power, nothing was unusual for getting them whatever their cost may have been. Yet this is not to say that members of gentry families lived happy lives and that everything was in its way. Political climax was very fluctuating and that is perhaps why people needed to make alliances. In fact this particular social circumstance that created the particularity of later medieval age. On the one hand, there were glamour, but on the one hand, there were tensions and problems.

After all problems still existed. Life was difficult for every part of the society, both for wealthy and noble and also for the poor and common people. Life was difficult

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[66] Kendall, *The Yorkist Age*, p. 361.

for the nobility because the nobility was at the expense of continuous warfare against their enemies. Life was difficult for the poor and middling people because they needed help and support from the higher ranks of the society in almost every aspect of life.[67] Thus, patronage and service necessitated each other and their existence was bound to each other. In fact, the existence of mutual needs of servants and masters led them to found alliances. And the need for demonstrating power affected the shape of household structures and numbers of servants.

Noblemen needed service for the above mentioned reasons. But what was the reason for the servant for wanting to serve to his master? From the point of view of servants, the service and patronage relationship was also a necessity. It was the possibility of patronage on the part of the lord that motivated service for the servant.[68] Thus, from this perspective it can be claimed that patronage generated service. It was also recognised that once a servant had benefited from the patronage of a lord, his obligations towards the lord were strengthened: petitioners, that is to say servants, believed that the past reference coming from their service to their lords ensured them the possibility of further patronage and more benefits in the future. It was usual to start a petition to the king with an appeal such as 'Please it your highness in consideration of the true and faithful service which N has done and during his life intends to do unto your most noble grace'. Such expressions were not formal, empty words, in fact, in some cases, lords threatened to cancel patronage to their servants.[69]

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[67]See for example: Horrox, *Richard III*, ch. 1-3.
[68] Ibid., pp. 10-20.
[69] Harl. 433, I, p. 44; Anthony Goodman, *The Wars of the Roses: Military Activity and English Society, 1452-97* (London: Routledge, 1981), pp.133-7.

There was no exact proportion between the level of patronage and the required service of the petitioner although a degree of fairness was the case.[70] In practice, the correlation between levels of service and patronage was not as exact as one might expect. Thus, since the boundaries of service and patronage are not so much precise, it is difficult to define what was the good lordship and who was the good lord, and, conversely what was the good service and who was the good server.

In the service and patronage relationship, obviously, the importance of self-interest as its basic element cannot be refuted. However, one cannot easily explain service and patronage relationship in terms of self interest only. Service was also conditioned by the consciousness of obedience to the rulers. This is perhaps the most important reason why service and patronage relationship gave society an order. Obedience on the part of servant was the most efficient way of attaining the security from the master. The security provided by the master was not a guarantee but without obedience it was guaranteed that the master would not do anything for his servant.

The service and patronage relationship started from the king and proceeded to the bottom. Naturally, the king had a particular position in the relationship. The king might require the help of all his subjects because his power was expected to be at the service of the whole community, not just his close servants, theoretically all English society were his servants.[71] The obedience of his subjects was based on their assumption that he will use that power properly. From this point of view, the relationship between the king and his subject was more formal than the relationship between the lord and his servant. Subjects wanting the help of the king did not refer to their lordship, which would

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[70] Horrox, *Richard III*, pp. 35-38.
[71] Ibid., pp. 47-52.

imply a relationship and thus, some obligation on the part of king but, they did refer to his grace, which was by the very meaning of the word unconstrained. [72]

Only the highest rank of the nobility could legitimately request the lordship of king and the definition of the king as the 'good lord of all good lords',[73] while it may be correct, expressed only one part of the king's role. The king's relations with his subjects, like those of lords and their servants, needed mutual trust and thus had a personal dimension. The character and abilities of the king had to be accepted by his subjects as giving him tacit credit in the form of confidence.[74] This is perhaps one of the reasons why kings succeeded or failed. Richard III, for example, gained the confidence of the North when he was the duke of Gloucester, but he failed to repeat the same process for the whole of England.[75] Lordship was therefore, a more complicated matter than distribution of grants among the deserved people. Service was also as complicated as lordship as being more than just securing as much benefit as possible.

Service was not considered as performing defined duties attached to a specific office.[76] It was a personal relationship between two men in which the servant was expected to do whatever the lord required of him. Obviously, this would not be something inappropriate to the specific abilities of servants but, on the other hand there was no formal description of what one particular servant can and cannot do. Especially for royal servants, the multiplicity of practice was more apparent, because their daily life was more completely documented than the common servers under the aristocratic service. From these records, Rosemary Horrox suggests that they were expected to do almost

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[72] For example the petition of John Paston II to Edward IV: *PL*, I, pp. 487-9.
[73] Horrox, *Richard III*, ch. 1-2.
[74] Ibid., ch. 1-2.
[75] Kendall, *The Yorkist Age*, p. 288.

anything while in some cases a lord would choose to utilise the particular connections and skills of their servants.[77] Obviously, it would be nonsense for a lord to request a service of one of his servants while he would be well aware that that particular duty could be fulfilled by that particular servant. After all, the aim of the lord was to get his job done. When Richard III ordered the Norfolk tenants of Mountgrace priory (Yorks) to wear no other livery than that of the prior, he gave this responsibility to Sir Hugh Hastings, who had relations with both Norfolk and Yorkshire.[78] However, for even servants with some specialised duties were likely to be taken on for additional unrelated tasks. Coleyns, for example, was constable of Queenborogh castle.[79] This diversity of duty fulfilling practice was accepted by everyone and no one in this respect would regard as abnormal the case of Thomas Elrington who, after spending a couple of months purveying workmen and supplies for Dunbar and seeing to the transport, was sent to seize forfeited land in the Home countries.[80]

Thus, the service and lordship relationship was not so much determined by clear-cut lines and its nature was more complex than one could expect. The reasons for this complexity are that both elements, service and patronage could take different forms in different circumstances and there is no exact parallel between service status and the reward to be yield from it. The service and patronage relationship was open-ended in the sense that the possession of a particular position by a servant was not the only definition of the service the servant required to fulfil. Thus, while officiality was not completely

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[76] Horrox, *Richard III*, ch. 1.
[77] Ibid., pp. 68-73.
[78] Harl. 433, II, p. 159.
[79] Harl. 433, I, p. 207, II, pp. 203, 213.
[80] Harl. 433, II, pp. 101-2, 149-50, 184

neglected, service and patronage relationship was merely based on personal considerations instead of formal ones. In practice very rough correlation existed.

Therefore, it is possible to distinguish between different types of service characterised by their importance and their level of reward expected by the petitioner. For the royal part, for example, a threefold division is possible.[81] The divisions of one and two are relevant to this study. In one part, there were men who were not formally royal servants at any rate but they were available for the special needs of the crown.[82] In fact, this group of men was the totality of England, because the king was able to appeal everyone to his service, since every Englishmen was the subject of his king. However, in practice, this group was largely restricted to men of influence who were known by the king, in other words, they were consisted of men of some local standing in their regional area. This group excepted little benefit such as a degree of local influence in the course of the service of the king as the particularity of the job needed. In consequence their responsibility was also limited. Their realm of responsibility rarely passed beyond the limits of their local area. Thus, their function in the eyes of the king was their influence and their knowledge of the local area to which they belonged. More particularly, their service consisted of providing information about the area, and settling any small-scale local problems. Thus, their role was not to act on behalf of the king as the official governor of the area, but to solve some minor problems under royal approval.

The second group, the non-household servants, were able to act on behalf of the king.[83] Similar to the first group, they were also men of local standing leading the king's affairs in their own local area. Thus, the motivation of the king for this group of

[81] Horrox, *Richard III*, ch 3.
[82] Ibid., ch 3.

men was also to use their local influence for his own benefit. These men had the chance of getting more important rewards from the king. However, we must remember that these rewards were only probabilities, not certainties. It is also important to note that for these men their position in hierarchy was not so much a determinant. Men of different rank were able to be chosen by the king.[84]

The household members of the king, apart from menial servants of course, were the most influential group of people and their realm of influence was the broadest and consequently, the scale of their job was the greatest. The king was most heavily dependent upon them. In local areas, they were responsible for the upper level estate management of royal lands. They had some other very important duties such as arresting rebels or seizing fortified land. These people were almost the only group of people who were able to perform their duties outside of their own area of influence, because their household status gave them the necessary influence for their inter-regional standing. Important duties were fulfilled by important servants of the king's household and relatively unimportant jobs were fulfilled by relatively unimportant household members of the king. These people belonged to the third category. As an example to the second category, David ap Jenkins who, had a duty of carrying valuable plates from the household of Richard III's household and bringing it to the king at Westminster. [85]

These men were closest to the king and thus they were the most probable to gain benefit. However, disobedience and even lack of enthusiasm on the part of servant would mean exclusion from this benefit. Clement Paston, commenting about the act of

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[83] Ibid., ch 4.
[84] For this type of exercise, Horrox gives two different exemplas of men who possessed different positions in society. See: ibid., p. 14.
[85] Harl. 433, II, pp. 212-13.

his nephew John II at the court stated that: 'But then I considered that if he should do him any service somewhere, that then he would have him home, the which should cause him not to be had in favour'.[86]

After all, the service and patronage relationship owes much to the household tradition of later medieval English society. Perhaps, it is possible to argue that the existence of household practice as a social institution led to the development of service and patronage relationship on such a large scale. The basic difference between household practice and service and patronage relationship is that in the households of gentry families, there were always allied poor servants working for their masters, but this household practice was limited to non-aristocratic people only. Usually, except from the household of the King, no other gentry and nobility families had aristocratic or noble household members.[87] For the king, however, the case was different since, firstly, everyone in the country was a natural subject of the king; and secondly, duties about the king were always important and for the noble families, it was a noble task to do king's service.[88] For the household tradition of the noble families, the clothing practice for example may tell us something about how important was the alliance between the members of one household, and how important were the basic needs of the servants of the household for their masters. As Kendall stated:

> Wives and waiting-women had to make up cloth into clothing not only for the family but for servants as well. At least one gown or a livery jacket was usually included in yearly wages. Often the shops of a nearby town could not supply what was needed.[89]

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[86] *PL*, p. 200.
[87] Horrox, *Richard III*, ch. 4.
[88] Ibid., ch 4.
[89] Kendall, *The Yorkist Age*, p. 361.

Service and Patronage in the Stonor Correspondence:

So far, the particular characteristics of the later medieval English gentry and nobility have been discussed. To be more particular, we can look at what the daily life in Stonor family during 1500s looked like. The relatively monotone life of Sir William Stonor in the reign of Edward IV represents the normal life of the upper gentry. He had problems with tenants, he was obliged to make numerous legal proceedings and so forth. His problem with the fortescue family over the manor of Ermington produced a degree of violence. The pressure of lordship was seen clearly. In a letter written by Henry Dogett to Sir William Stonor in 24 December 1478, Dogett said that:

> ...after dew recomendacion pleasith yow to wete that my clerke and your servaunte have been at Abendon with the vicar of Seynt Elyns to have leverey of your cuppe, and offurred hym x. li. Acordyng to your writeyn: and he answered them that he wold not deliver the said cuppe with owte the bille indented that is made bytwene yow be brought upon the deliveraunce: and to have sewrete for the residew of the money to be piad at Candelmas next. I remitte all to your maistershep and wysedome. The said x. li. shall be redy at eny thyme that ye like, havyng fro your maistershep a writeyng to be content ayen by Ester next comynge...[90]

Apart from showing that Stonor family had some problems with others, this letter is a good example for confirming what I have so far argued. Mastership and servantship were legitimate and people were addressing some other people as 'my

[90] *SLP*, pp. 326-327.

master' or 'my servant', and these servants had some functions for their masters. Henry Dogett did some jobs *acordyng to* William Stonor's *writeyn.* William Stonor as a master requested something by means of a letter and Henry Dogett as a servant of Willam Stonor did that job.

Mastership and servantship had protection function too. Yet, it is important to distinguish between good mastership and bad mastership. The following case is a good example of how important good mastership was. I have also suggested that reward in return for service was not a guarantee but a sheer expectation, and the following case is also a good example to this. In 1459-60, a swift shift occurred in the fortunes of John Paston and in the balance powers in Norfolk. One year before the Yorkists gained control of England, Sir John Fastolf died in November 1459. He left all his properties in Norfolk and Suffolk to John Paston. Paston, did whatever necessary in order to convince his wife Margaret to retain this magnificient inheritance,[91] but, unfortunately, while the political situations were in favour of him, he never succeeded in achieving the *good lordship* necessary to protect his fortunes.[92] Thus, this is a good example confirming that in later medieval England it was believed that good lordship required help in some cases. In our particular example this help was in the form of protection of the fortunes of Margaret Paston on account of John Paston. In fact, apart from losing many of his fortunes, John Paston was sent to Fleet Prison, in an environment where Sir John Howard, a close friend of John Paston was the King's servant. Edward investigated the case and found that John Paston was not guilty. He thus ordered him to be released. By this time, however, many

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[91] There are various letters concerning this subject in Paston collection, see for example, *PL.*, II, pp. 210-220.

[92] For a more detailed information about the proceedings of the events concerning John Paston's failure, see: Kendall, *The Yorkist Age*, pp. 214-16.

people were trying to get a portion of the Fastolf inheritance. To get the good lordship he needed at most, Paston had his eldest son, Sir John Paston Jr. but, the young Paston did not have enough money or friends or servants or masters to which to get help. Thus he failed to aid his father. However, the elder Paston had another son, who was the member of the Duke of Norfolk's household.[93]

Household practice of later medieval England was diverse. While servants were members of the household of their master, family members were also members of that household. It may be claimed that the meaning of family and household were in some ways united. Masters have seen their most beloved household members as a part of their family, and family members conversely, were admitted as a member of master's household.[94] Husbands and wives would complete each other's duties especially when one of them was absent. In this case, the household was a 'broke up household' and the husbands or wives were called 'sojournants'. Sometimes husbands 'went to board' namely, they went to London or a provincial town, sometimes they reside in the manor house of a friend or kinsman or anyone else.[95] John Paston's brother William wrote to his nephew Sir John on April of 1467, that Margaret Paston and their friend James Arblaster were in such a position that 'I have appointed that we shall keep no household this term, but go to abroad, wherefore we advise you to purvey for us a lodging near about my lord Chancellor that be honest, for Arblaster will none other. Item, as for you...get your chamber assigned within my lord's place, and get chamber alone if ye may, that Arblaster

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[93] A detailled discussion is available in: ibid., p. 214-35

[94] Horrox does not explicitly argues this point, but, when on reads ch3, this comes to mind: *Richard III*, ch. 3.

[95] Kendall, *The Yorkist Age*, p. 232.

and I may have a bed therein if it fortune us to be late with you there.[96] In the Stonor Letters we also find evidence about the practices when, head of the household was abroad. Elisabeth Stonor wrote to her husband William Stonor a series of letters informing him periodically about what had been done for some particular jobs: In Stonor family, the jobs were mostly fulfilled by the eldest son of the family: Bedson.[97]

The politics of later medieval England was complex. Members of the aristocracy of later medieval England were in competition with each other for becoming more powerful socially or politically. Interestingly, for the 'aristocrats' of the time, the concept of power was not strictly bound to the individual wealth and political strength of the noble but of the 'household' usually he, very rarely she possessed. The society of the time created its unique ethical value: the 'worship' of a man. The concepts of a man's worth, honour or worship on the one hand, and his shame on the other, are the basic terms for understanding the very essential functioning mechanism of late medieval English society.[98] The main aim of the members of the nobility of later medieval England was to increase their 'worship' (ie., their honour, being the main component of their worth) in the eyes of other members of the aristocracy. "The worship of a man" was an intriguing conception. There had been many attempts to define the unique concept of "worship". McFarlane suggested that a men's worship, in a way his rank "among his fellow noblemen was determined by the number and consequences of the people who were enrolled in his *meine*. Failure to answer his summons brought him into contempt".[99] Having outlined his interpretation of 'worship', McFarlane quotes a letter from the

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[96] Ibid., pp. 402-03.
[97] See for example *SLP.*, nos: 171, 172, 173, 175, 176.
[98] Horrox, *Richard III*, p. 3-10.

Stonor collection as an evidence for his view. The letter dated January 1471, was sent by a servant of John de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk, to Thomas Stonor:

> Yef ye may in eny wyse or your goyng to London, ye wole take the laboure as to come hider to speke with my seid Lord and lady for diverse grete matters and causes that ey wolde speke unto you of. And yef ye may not come hider, than that ye wole find the meane to my lord Chaunceler as to excuse my lord of his comyng not to London at this time, like as my seid lordwas wreten uno by a pryve seall whiche was delivered to him on Munday last passed at vj of the clokke withynne night at Ewelme, which as your maystership knoweth well was right shorte warnying, remembering that the more parte of my lordes servauntes were sente into Suffolk to the houshold there ayens Crystemasse, and the remenaunt of his servauntes, that were here awayting, your maystership knoweth well been for the with my lady, my lordes wyf, into Suffolk to bringe her thider: ffor God knoweth she thought full longe from the yonge lorde and yonge ladies here childerne that been there. [100]

This letter may be evidence for this evaluation. However, it should be borne in mind that this is simply a letter and in letters people may also lie in order to refute someone else's proposal. Here, probably there is an invitation from Thomas Stonor. We may be never sure that John de la Pole wanted to visit Thomas Stonor. John de la Pole had two choices: either to accept or to decline Thomas Stonor's invitation. If John de la Pole would not have wanted to participate to the above mentioned ceremony, he would obviously have to find a proper excuse to refuse the invitation. His lack of household would be a good opportunity to legitimise his refusal of invitation. On the other hand, if

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[99] K. B. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 106.

we claim that without regarding whether John de la Pole's servant was lying or not, this letter can still show that a Lord's remoteness from his servants may be an *acceptable* and *suitable* excuse for the decline of an invitation at that period of time since John de la Pole particularly chosed to say *that the more parte of my lordes servauntes were sente into Suffolk to the houshold there ayens* instead of something else, it may still mislead us. Because, John de la Pole's aim may be to show to Thomas Stonor implicitly that he did not wish to participate to the invitation by urging a half acceptable and half dubious pretext. Thus, this letter, which is the only evidence of McFarlane's view may or may not support his claim. Nevertheless, the expression of the more part of my lords were sent into Suffolk shows the worth given by the master to his servant.

It may be true that household demonstrated something for the noblity. It had either a function or it added to the prestige of its lord. After all, the lord had to build up a household for his own benefit, but were there any legal regulations or traditional principles for the size and total price of the household? The determination of fees and annuities were legal, and there was no limitation on its size.[101] McFarlane suggests that there was a practice to convert the stewardships of groups of manors into what were virtually sinecures, the holder doing what work there was by deputy.

However, the size of a household had to be appropriate: It should not have been *too large* or *too small*. If a noble would reduce the size of his household, his worship would diminish on the eyes of his fellow noblemen. If he would increase the size

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[100] *SLP.*, pp. 204-05.

[101] McFarlane notes a 'vague' ordinance of 1316, but this, as he suggests was a sumptuary ordinance and its chief concern was to restrict extravagange. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England*, p. 107.

of his household too much, then, his expenses for his household members would become a heavy burden. In 1480, William Harleston of Denham in Suffolk wrote that:

> For Goddes sake be ware now, for now ye may breke youre howshold with your honour and worshchep, now after the decesse of my good lady your wiff, and stabill your howshold now sadely and wisely with a convenient feleshepp so as ye may kepe you withynne yowr Iyveliode; for a wise men will cast afore what falle aftirwarde. And be war of your moder hert, and take your fader hert, on whoys sowle I beseche almygthy God have mersy. And of certain thynges I wold desire you and and pray you in the name of God, that wolle not ower wissh yow, ner pwyr purches yow, ner owyr bild you; for these iij thynges wolle plucke a yongman ryth lowe. Ner medyll not with no gret materis in the lawe... And, syr... of on thyng at is tolde me, that ye do make a fayre newe garden. In the wche I pray for you for my sake to sette too herbis, whihe ben paciens Thyme; And that thies too herbis be put in the potage that ye ete, so as ye may ete them daily.[102]

Thus, it was necessary to establish a harmony between economic circumstances and the need to acquire a good standing: splendour versus scarcity of resources. The reference to a garden may give a clue about what king of expenses money was spent on. The construction of gardens and parks was also a big enterprise of the time. The keeping of records of men of the household in detail and a large staff of household offices had some different purposes than just display of richness and power. It is true that the household had a practical side, yet, the worship was so important that if one would have lost it, it would lead him to shame and rebuke. Perhaps the degree of functionality of an household was of secondary importance. Consider the letter of Thomas Stonor to

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[102] *SLP.*, pp. 354-55.

his wife Jane Stonor on the occasion of the death of his mother and her second husband, Richard Drayton, on 8 October 1468.

> And myne owne Jane, I thanke God myne adversari of Devenshere hathe had no wurshyp: ffor ther aperyd xliij gentlymen as this day, and he is shamyd and nonsuyd in the cort to his great shame.[103]

In this letter, Thomas Stonor thinks that the mentioned person had no 'worship' since there 'aperyd xliij gentlymen as this day'. The only reason behind his thought is this and nothing else. That is to say, the amount of servants to be collected for showing to other members of the nobility. Thus, for the nobility, the number of people being ready as servants in an important day was particularly important simply because they brought that noble a degree of 'worship'. the function and duties of the servants were secondarily important. Probably, for gaining 'worship' and nothing else, gentry of later medieval England had to spend money without any functional return except social 'worship'. It is also important to note that the lack of 'worship' was seen as a 'great shame'.

The household permitted its owner to help his friends and to create fear among his enemies. A feudal-like reciprocal relations were valid in master-household member relations. The lord offered good lordship and protection which were necessary for their advancement in life and in turn, household members offered good service and obedience. This was simply a mutual profit exchange. Even the remotest kinship ties were to be remembered. A good example for this smooth maneover can be found in a letter written by Thomas Gate to Thomas Stonor at around 1474.

> Thomas Ramsey, your kynnesman and y his, wherof to me-werd he makith gret staungenese: y merveile why: our faders, of whos sowlez God have

[103] *SLP.*, p. 185.

> mercy, dyd not so, for their moders weren cosyns germaynez descended of Sir Milys Beauchamp, knyght, late lorde of the manor of Hucham, litill Merlowe, Crowelton and Illesley, entailled to hym and his wif and to her heires generall, doughter to Sir Ric. Noirnute, knytght, donor of the seid entaile, which Milys had issu Robert Beauchamp, Besayle of your kynnesman aforseid, and dame Elizabeth, my Bealayez, married to John du Brutewell, myn auncestor: the denyer of these premissez is oon of the causez of my writtyng to your mastership: blame me nat of this, for it is reasonable a gentilman to know his pedegre and his possibilyte: seynt Poule foryete nat to write to the Romayns of what lynage he was descended, Ad Romanos xj. Also I merveile of this unkyndes of your seid kynnesman to me warde and my frends in seying, writtyng and doyng, and hath in me found no cause nor occacion, but alwey to my power tru lovyng and kynde, unto nowe late he wrote to me a letter of unkyndes, y trowe in hast, and so it was answerd, wherof me repented. Howe be it myn extent was y wold nat have the taile aforeseid lost ne foryetten by hym, for y have seyn it in his handes and red it, as y can remember hym well: for what cause therfor our letterz of unkyndnes were made, and for that it pleassed hym to take partie with straungers as to his blode both ayenst me and my allye Thomas Worley a servant of the kynges, as for the right of my cosyn Kateryn his wif, havyng no resonable consideracion to my understandyng. [104]

Thomas Gate of Brutewell was escheator of the counties of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire before 1467.[105] There are two possibilities. First, the descent of Thomas Ramsey is Richard Nernute. Nernute had a son Myles, whose daughter Isabel married Reginald Beauchamp. The Beauchamp line of descent was Myles, Myles, John Richard, Myles of Hicham, and Robert. Robert's daughter Isabel married Thomas

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[104] *SLP.*, p. 224.
[105] *SLP.*, p. 224.

Ramsey, father Thomas Ramsey who married Isabel Hampden who is a half-sister of the first Thomas Stonor. Second, Miles de Beauchamp held *Hucham* or Hitcham at his death in 1336. He was probably the father of Robert de Beauchamp, who was great-grandfather of Thomas Ramsey of 1474 and brother of Elizabeth, the ancestress of Thomas Gate.[106] The appeal may come from the above also. In 1469, an unidentified man wrote to Thomas Stonor:

> Ffor as much as I understonde by my lorde ffitz Wareyn that he hathe diverse thynges to doo with you for certain matiers touchyng bothe his worship and profite, wher in ye maye greatly please and also put ou in suerte to have in tyme to come, if you neded, right good lordsip as well of my lorde of Essex, to whom I am moste bounde, as of other my lordes his brethern: for throuth, my lorde of Essex, and he also, specyally desired me to write you, thynkyng that ye shulde be the better willed for my sake, the which I wyll veryly trust ye will doo. Also I understonde that the title of Jobury is by his owne Counsell waved and taken for nought.[107]

Here, it is important to note the expression 'my lorde of Essex, to whom I am moste bounde'. This exprssion is a good example illustrating the nature of affinities. As I will discuss in more detail below, the service and patronage relationship was an open-ended relationship, that is to say, just as masters had various servants, servants too, had various masters. In some instances, the affinity to one master had to be chosen, because the loyalty to one master may have meant the disloyalty to another.

Usually it was not so easy to keep things in order for the aristocratic class. The worship of a noble was always important and it was perhaps the most significant collaborator in the quest for success. Power was to be demonstrated to all as efficiently as

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[106] *SLP.*, pp. 223-24.

possible. Politics was possible largely by means of power and power was largely possible by means of glamourous and splendourous demonstrations.

Was the relationship between master and servant firmly reciprocal and well-balanced? The servant offered a degree of independent power or status. First of all, the reciprocal relationship between master and servant first of all, legitimised the servant's inferiority. The honourable servant, whatsoever his status may have been, owed deference to his master.[108] However, in some cases, a lord may have asked his servant to act on his behalf simply because the servant was, in some respects, more influential, more skilled or better placed than the lord himself. In this case, the master tacitly accepted that the servant was more worthy than himself. In a letter in August 23, 1454, Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, wrote to John Paston I to enlist his help in a local matter, in order to ask for his service:

> Worshipfull and my right trusty and wel-beloved frende, I grete you well, and forasmuchas I have purchased of the worshipfull and my welbeloved frende, Priour of Walsyngham, ij. maners in Lityl Snoryng, with thappurtenants, in the Counte of Norffolk, which maners be cleped Bowles and Walcotes,-I desir and hertily praye yow, that ye woll shewe to me, and my feoffes in my name, your good will and favour, so that I may by your frendship the more peasably rejoy my forsaid purchase.
>
> And more over I praye you to yeve credens in this mater to my welbeloved chapellayn, Syr John Suthwell, my feithful frende, as my gret trust is in you, wherin ye shall do to me a singular pleasir, and cause me to bee you available by the grace of God, who preserve you and sende you welfare.[109]

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[107] *SLP.*, p. 191.
[108] Stonor letters are full of words expressing deference.
[109] *Paston Letters 1422-1509 A.D.*, I, ed. by James Gairdner (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1910), p. 299.

John Paston I was not a formal servant of Richard Neville, and the earl's careful style shows that he knew himself to be asking a favour. However, the style is not so different in a letter of the same period from Paston's lord, the earl of Oxford, excepting an offer for good lordship, which was most probably taken for granted.

> Right trusty and welbeloved friend we greete you ryght hertily well. And forsomuch as we bee informed that Thomas Kecham, a servant of our right welbeloved brother Sir Richard Vere, knyght, hath to do with Sir Harry Inglose, knyght, in a certain matter in which your good mastership may cause his singular ease... we praye yow heartily that at the reverence of us and this our writing you will take the labour upon you to speak unto the said Sir Harry... In the which faithfully doing we shall offer you hearty thanks.[110]

Thus, in some cases, the relationship of master and servant was more balanced, and the rules of hierarchy and deference were not so absolute.[111] There is, at least to a degree, a mutuality between the relationship of lord and his man. This mutuality and balance becomes more clear when the rewards of the service are the case. Obviously, the lord benefited from the service of his servant. By consequence, he should somehow 'pay' in return. The form of this payment may be material reward (such as granting of land, office or money) or it may bring a gift to facilitate servant's aim (such as help in a law case or towards a good marriage). It may be claimed that, while servants had some duties towards their masters, the masters had also some duty-like obligations towards their servants. In one occasion, one of the servants of Edward IV wanted to marry a lady, Edward IV himself wrote to this certain lady:

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[110] *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, 2 vols, ed. by N. Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), II, no. 476.

[111] *Essays on Fifteenth Century Nobility*, ed. by Horrox,

> Our welbelovyd sevuant N, bailiff if our town C, hath so grounded, established and set his hert and inworde affectione upone yow ovir all other women by way of good, true and faithful love according to the plesure of God and not otherwise. Which to bee brought unto an amiable and goodly conclusion would be to our grete pleasure...(we pray) that at our instance yo would be the more hertily disposed towords a final ende and matrimoniale conclusione... You shalt not only purvey you of such a fellow as shall be to your worship, heart's ease and profit in time comyng, but also shall cose us for his sake to be unto yow right good and graciouse lorde at alle times hereafter.[112]

This above letter is another example to the masters' function for the servant. In this case the servant requested something from his master and master used his influence. In fact, there was a tacit tradition implying the principle that a lord who cared for the interests of his servants was a 'good lorde'. The *leitmotiv* behind the servants to serve their lord properly and effectively was the possibility of acquiring material gain though this never had been warranted in advance. Thus, while I have already suggested that there was a degree of reciprocity in the profit relationship, this was balanced in favour of the master's aims instead of having an equivalence.[113]

Another profit which servants could acquire from the service they brought to their master was that in serving their master they were proclaiming their proximity to powerful persons (ie. their master). The knowledge that they had the support of powerful persons could ease the position of the servant in any dispute, even if their master did not participate in the discussion directly. After all, the service to a man of upper rank brought

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[112] *PL.*, II, no. 490.

[113] *Essays on Later Medieval England*, ed. by Rosemarry Horrox, p. 181.

psychological relaxation simply because of this.[114] For John Paston, for example, it was a great pleasure to flaunt his association with the most powerful man at Edward IV's court:

> And when I hath showen him myne intente he was agreeable and vary glad if that it myght please youre lordshype to accept him into your service, whereto I promysyd him my poore helpe as fare as I durst move your good lordshyp for hym... He desiryd me to move Master Fytzwalter to be good myster to hym in this behalfe, and so I did; and he was very glade and agreable thereto, seiyng yf his son had been of age, and all the servants he hath might be in any wyse acceptable to your lordship, that they all and himself in like wyse shall be at your commandment while he liveth.[115]

Thus, in some cases people of relatively lower rank showed particular interest in entering under the service of some particular men of influence: in this particular instance our John Paston would be 'vary glad if that it myght please' his 'lordsype to accept him into' his 'service'. Because being under the service of a man of higher rank would most probably increase the worship and prestige of the servant as well. Thus worship of a man was not uniquely depended on the master's properties, servants also enjoyed the worship of their master by increasing their own worship in this manner.

While there was a degree of exclusivity and while alliances could alter when political circumstances changed (ie. the ties between masters and servants were not absolute), service would confer honour, in fact, it was a matter of honour. It was not, on the side of servant, a pursuit of self-interest by shamelessly acquiring and abandoning lords in order to get profit from new alliances. While the oaths taken by royal officials may not mention loyalty or fidelity, there is a moral side in the following letter:

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[114] MacFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England*, pp.161-71.
[115] *PL.*, I, no. 501.

> You shalt swear that well and truly you shalt serve our sovereign lord the king... You shall doo and purchase the king's profit in all that ye may reasonably do... Where you shall know any wrong or prejudice to be done to the king, you shall put and doo all yowr power and diligence that to redness.[116]

As this letter shows, at least in theory, the servant had to serve to the king well and truly. Moreover, the servant was expected to do his best to increase the king's profit in every circumstance. However, the most important question still remains as what if the profits of the king (or at best his master, because to find a circumstance where the profits of a king and a servant would clash is highly unprobable) and his servant would clash in a critical circumstance. Unfortunately there is no convincing answer to this question in the light of available evidence. In fact, while the affinity network was well-established the ethics of loyalty was not as firm as its *reason-d'etre*, because, under normal circumstances, there was no contrary tradition for a servant to be in the service of different lords simultaneously. However, there were some periods when this practice became impossible. In these circumstances, obedience to one lord would necessarily become the disobedience to another. The Wars of the Roses is an example of this unusual circumstance. Servants were faced with the obligation of taking their part decisively.[117] Once more, the service and patronage relationship affected politics. In fact in England, service maintenance and politics all went together during the later medieval period.[118] The necessity of the satisfaction of the needs of both servants and lords sometimes made

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[116] Ibid., I, no. 49.

[117] The Wars of the Roses were obviously the wars of the nobles. The quest of higer nobility for acquiring alliances and affinities of lower noble people are illustrated in various studies. Political circumstances of the time are explained in more detail in Desmond Seward, *The Wars of the Roses, and The Lives of Five Men and Women*,

the conditions more complex. Sir John Fastolf, described what losing a certain law case would mean to him:

> For in good feithe, I drede most the shame and the rebuke that we should have if the matter concyrning the award went contrary against your intent and mine, as God defend, for then grete coste and labour were lost. And the greate rebuke and villainy should grieve me worst of all, for nowadays you know well that law goeth as it is favoureth.[119]

Here, the expressions 'if the matter concyrning the award went contrary against your intent and mine' shows the reciprocity of service and patronage relationship. Moreover, 'grete coste' may have spent by the servant or the master and if the servant spent money it was because of an expectation of a reward and nothing else. At least, most probably in this circumstance, the 'grete labour' was spent by the servant, and it was a risk that a 'greate rebuke and villainy' may have grieve them both. All efforts were to gain something for the so-called 'worldly advancement'. Thus, worldly advancement and service and patronage relationship were all linked together. In this world of reciprocal profit relationships perhaps the most natural expected behaviour pattern would be that while masters insured the existence of their servant and they wanted the good of them, servants also wanted the good of their master. John Russe wrote to his master John Paston about a dispute over the Fastolf inheritance:

> Men say ye will neither follow the advice of yowr owne kindred or of yowr council, but only your own wilfulness, which, but grace bee, shall be your

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[118] McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England*, pp. 163-72.
[119] *SLP*, II, no.520.

destruction. It is my part to inform your mastership as the common voice is... For it is half a death for me to hear the general voice of the people.[120]

Thus, it may be safely claimed that either appearent or secret competition between master and his servants was not the case or at least it was not common among the gentry. Both parts wanted the good of the other and giving advise was not the duty of master only. Perhaps it is possible to see the situation as a joint insurance process as master being the insurance of servant and servant being the insurance of master. The destruction of one part would most probably hasard the other part. In this circumstance normally, there would be a support between them in stead of secret competition. They both accepted their position and no one refuted it unless there had been severe changes in their social and political positions.

The word honour had a different meaning for the lord and for his servant. For the lord, it meant the greatness of his household either in quantity or in quality. The honour of the lord was the greatness of his 'worship' leading to his worth. Sometimes one of the main concerns of the lords was to develop the most effective strategy, to get the possible greatest household without investing 'alle the good they had'. The meaning of honour for the servant was to be loyal to his lord(s), and to be the servant of higher rank of masters. The aim of the servant was to acquire maximum profit either in material form or in the form of support in the eye of others, from his lord in return for his precious service without hazarding his own worth[121].

It was not usually the case that a servant would be disloyal to his master for a small profit acquired when changing alliances because while this maneover may have led

[120] *Ibid.*, II, no. 671.

to a material profit in the short term, it may have been a loss in the long term either because the shame would decrease the worth of the servant or because the closeness and remoteness to leading persons was very important.[122] Obviously, honour was one of the most, but not the only, important entity to be acquired. In fact, it was an important component of power.

Society of the time was strictly hierarchical in nature. A lord was a servant of a greater master(s) and a servant was a lord of a lesser servant(s).[123] The relationships were very sophisticated and complex but not permenant. The alliances may have been changed if the servant would feel that the master was not profitable enough for himself, or if the lord would think that the servant would not be so useful for his aims or that he would not have enough money to pay to him.[124]

The question of how did the noble affinities of fifteenth-century English gentry emerge remains still a difficult task with which to deal. This study aimed to analyse the later medieval society in order to find an answer to this question. The role of service and patronage relationships and household formations are investigated in more detail in the light of politics practice of the age. This study establishes the fact that the later medieval society was based on a fairly well-established hierarchical order. Power politics were affected from this order and this order affected the power politics of the age. Demonstration of power in every opportunity in an appearent way was a peculiar characteristic of the age. This demonstration of power found its expression in every aspect of life as well as service and patronage relationship. The importance of king in this

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[121] Horrox, *Richard III*, ch.2.
[122] Ibid., ch. 2.
[123] Ibid., ch. 3.
[124] Ibid., ch. 3.

power politics and service patronage relationship cannot be refuted. In fact the starting point of this tradition may be the kings themselves. This tradition of king's request of duties from some particular men of influence spread all around the society and service and patronage relationship became a firm institution of the age. On the other hand, the functionality of the service and patronage relationship made this institution a long-life institution. Service and patronage relationship was a mutual two-sided and fairly well-balanced relationship: both parts gained something. Masters gained service of their master, and servants gained security and aid. Honour was the gain of both parts. Master acquired honour as his household grew, and servant gained honour as he succeeded to be a servant of an important nobleman. This functionality of service and patronage relationship and kings' practice of accepting aids of some upper nobility members came together and led to the emergence of affinities in the course of time. The Stonor letters and papers, as well as those of the Paston give some insights into the nature of 'the ties that bound'. As we have seen, there are some very useful evidence showing how important for the nobility of later medieval England were the loyalty and worship of a noble. In fact, it was very ususal to find related information in gentry correspondences because the gentry families were the most important actors for service and patronage relationship. In fact, this relationship was the basic mode of behaviours of this class. Unfortunately, a complete and well-established study of affinities cannot be fulfilled by simply limiting the scope of the study to gentry correspondences. A fuller picture of the service and patronage relationship can be traced in the light of other resources.[125] However, the basic nature of the relationship is fairly appearent in these letter collections.

[125] Such as: see the list.

Chapter III:
Family and Marriage

If service was the peculiar institution determining fifteenth-century English society, then the marriage practice of the time was at least its subordinate element. One cannot explain the unique character of late medieval English society without examining the nature of its marriage practices. Marriage affected society, and it is affected by the unique social institutions of the time. In what ways did the marriages of fifteenth-century England differ from those of other societies and other times? Marriage affected family structures and families affected marriage practices. The service and patronage relationship also affected marriage practice of later medieval England. Marriage and family institutions of the fifteenth-century English gentry and lesser nobility had a functional basis. Family and marriage had a function in providing order to the society. Marriage was seen as a good and easy step for 'worldly advancement' in the hierarchical development of individuals.[126]

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[126] There are various works about the family structure and marriage practices of the later medieval English nobility. The first three sources dealt especially with family organisations. In this study I will especially draw upon the following works: Ralph A. Houlbrooke, *The English Family 1450-1700* (London and New York: Longman Press, 1984); and Rosemary O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships, 1500-1900, England, France, and the United States of America* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillian Press, 1994). The following works are especially important for marriage: Alan McFarlane, *Marriage and Love in England 1300-1840* (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell Press, 1993); Michael M. Sheehan, *Marriage, Family, and Law in Medieval Europe: Collected Studies*, ed. by James K. Farge (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996); and Frances and Joseph Gies, *A Medieval Family: The Pastons of Fifteenth-Century England* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998); and, additionally, there are also the following works to be analysed for a detailed study: Alcuin Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992); Christopher N. L. Brooke, *The Medieval Idea of*

The concept household gains a new meaning when analysing the family practice of fifteenth-century England. In many circumstances, servants of a noble family were regarded as members of the family. However, usually, their membership was in secondary degree. Usually, but not always, in gentry families, the couple to be married were arranged by their parents. Love and romance was not completely absent from the marriage circles but it was rare. 'Worship of a man' became worship of the family when marriage of the children of noble families was the case. Noble families gave much importance to the 'worship' of the family their children would marry. In this chapter, I will analyse the basic family structure of the time, especially for the noble class, and how it affected marriage practice. Then, the importance of religion for the existence of families and marriage will be analysed, and lastly, some particular examples can be given for understanding general marriage and family practice of later medieval ages. Again, I will use the Stonor letters and papers and Paston correspondence as evidence.

Family and Marriage in Fifteenth-Century England:

As it is the case for most societies, the society of later medieval England was composed of threelevels: community, family and individual. The service relationship was the general trend of the community being its basic ethical understanding, for the family, I shall investigate what people of the time expected from marriage, and why marriage was so important for the lesser nobility and gentry of fifteenth-century England. People married for a variety of reasons. In contrast to what is believed, members of the fifteenth-

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Marriage (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Edith Ennen *The Medieval Women*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1989); and Seccombe Wally, *A*

century English gentry and lesser nobility were not so 'typical' in their daily actions. In fact their actions in similar conditions could vary significantly. For this reason, it is almost impossible to categorise the dominant behaviour type of the gentry class. Different gentry families from different regions of the country behaved quite differently in parallel circumstances. If one examines different gentry correspondences from different regions of the England for generally a fixed period of time, one can find interestingly different practices of marriage.[127] Thus, while 'gross generalisations' are not possible (and as they are usually dangerous) some regularities may be demonstrated. Marriage was mostly (and not necessarily always) 'a matter of business' instead of being an emotional and self-expressive phenomenon of the opposite sexes. The most important reason for this was that demonstration of power was still the basic point determining marriage practice of gentry, and family structure of the later medieval England affected marriage practice, and marriage affected family structure in a variety of ways. As I believe, marriage was for creating new families and new families were for creating new candidates of marriage.

It has been claimed that, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the nuclear family was the basic element in English society.[128] To support this, it has been argued that clearly defined larger groups of relatives were not common at all, and for this reason, the individual's main loyalties were on their elementary families, while the ties

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Millenium of Family Change: Feudalism to Capitalism in Northwestern Europe (London: Verso Press, 1992).

[127] This fact is best illustrated in Keith Dockray, 'Why did Fifteenth-Century English Gentry Marry?: The Pastons, Plumptons and Stonors Reconsidered', in *Gentry and Lesser Nobility in Later Medieval Europe,* ed. by Michael Jones (Gloucester: Sutton, 1986(, pp.60-72.

[128] Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p.18.

with other kin were not absent at all, either materially or emotionally.[129] Thus, the nuclear family was the basic residential unit in England.[130] According to this view, the family had certain functions. Family life was influenced by religion, literature, law custom, and various other social phenomena.[131]

Apparently, there were various forms of family life patterns in the sophisticated social structure of fifteenth-century English society. Social status, means of livelihood, material resources, and social relationships with others all influenced household size and structure.[132] On the other hand, the household size and structure also influenced social status, means of livelihood, accumulation of material resources, and quality and quantity of social relationships.[133] In chapter 2 above I have discussed the service and patronage relationships of the society, how important it was for a member of the gentry to show his 'worship' to other members of the gentry and aristocracy. In theStonor letters and papers we see that eiher William Stonor and John Stonor were the 'worshipful masters' of John Clever, and Willam Stonor was the servant of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick.[134] Both members of the same family were servants of the same person. This is perhaps a good instance showing the importance of family ties and service and patronage relationship. If the father is a servant of a man of higher nobility, the son had an advantage to be accepted to the service of the same man of influence.

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[129]Ibid., p.19.
[130] This idea have been mentioned in various studies such as O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships,*especially ch.3-4; Rosenthal *Patriarchy and Families of Privilege*, ch.2; Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p.123.
[131] Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, pp. 20-21.
[132] O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships,* pp.18-22.
[133] Ibid., pp.20-25.
[134] These points are obvious in: *SLP,* nos: 112, 116, 121, 180-181.

There are various meanings of the term 'family'. The one which is most commonly used today is a nuclear or elementary group composed of parents and children.[135] In a broader sense it can signify all an individual's relatives by blood or marriage. The emphasis on blood tie is important for later medieval England, but, at the same time, it is open to discussion how much it affected the so-called 'family' of the time. It is in this respect that the family structure of later medieval England differed radically from the family of modern world.[136] The household members of a gentry, whether tied to the gentry family by blood or marriage or not, were in practice accepted as belonging to the gentry family in question.[137] In Stonor letters and papers we see letters calling the servants of a gentry family as a part of that family. The expressions such as 'as ye wete knowe oure son X ys willyng...' or oure deerst servaunte ende most belovyd son' are very common. In these circumstances the sons are not the sons by blood but they are the serants of the Stonor family[138] Consequently, as a *de facto* institution the family of later medieval England was different than today's family instituition, while as a *de jure* institution it can denote quite parallel meanings. Thus, the conception of family of fifteenth-century English aristocracy passed beyond the traditional boundaries of the blood tie. Family was in this respect, more or less, an institution created by means of reciprocal convenience of a group of people. While the blood bonds were not unimportant, it was not an essential to be a 'member' of a gentry family. Thus, family structures were based on a synthesis of a group of people who were tied each other with

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[135] McFarlane, *Marriage and Love in England*; and O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships,* esp. ch.3.
[136] Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, pp. 121-31.
[137] Ibid., p. 31
[138] see for example: *SLP:* nos: 123, 131, 146.

blood and a convention and agreement of a group of people that another group which showed an important degree of affinity to the chief of the family of the gentry class.

I have mentioned above that family had certain functions. The main function of the family was to give order to society.[139] If the service-patronage relationship was the first social institution giving order to society, family is definitely the second. Husband and wife had certain responsibilities towards each other and towards both children and servants as well.[140] The relationship between family members, as was the case in service patronage relationship, was reciprocal. The servants and children were obliged to obey their parents in their return. In 1471, Margaret Stonor wrote to her husband that their son while at the beginning he was unwilling to do so, did his job well at the end concerning lending some money to one of their family friends. In fact it seems that if Thomas Stonor had not been away, he would himself give that money to their friend but, since he was away, this responsibility fell to their son.[141] Moreover, the husband was the chief of the household, and wives usually behaved according to the comands of their husbands. In a letter written by Dame Elizabeth Stonor to Sir William Stonor on March 6 1477, the wife (ie. Dame Elizabeth) informs her husband that she had sent his lord Lovell. The expression is: 'I have sent my lorde Lovell a tokyn and my ladys, as ye comaunde me to do.'[142] Here, the expression of 'as ye comaunde me to do' is a good evidence showing the power of husbands.

On the other hand, as Houlbrooke has suggested, although servants and children were members of the same family, the bases of their membership, the extent of

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[139] O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships,* pp.10-3.
[140] Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p. 25.
[141] *SLP,* no: 173.
[142] *SLP,* no: 204 (pp.297-8).

their duties to the heads of the households and the duration of their residence were different.[143] Thus, it is perhaps possible to make a classification concerning the membership type in a family since there were such a quite sharp distinction of duty and rights between different members of the family. Perhaps the members of the family who were tied each other were the primary group, and primary members of the family and the people who were not in a blood relationship with the former group were the secondary members of the family. Thus, at least a very rough classification is possible to divide family membership into two types. As in Stonor letters, when sending the greetings of other members of family, it was usually the case that the sons and daughters of blood were told. The greetings of servants were sent only if there was a particular concern about that servant.[144]

Another function of marriage was to raise children and to provide the continuity of the family-name and strength in the future.[145] Thus, there had been an obvious strategy to encourage women to have children as early as possible in their productive period of life.[146] Mainly for this reason, women entered marriage during puberty at about fifteen or so.[147] For the Stonor family, this was the case when Elisabeth Stonor wrote to her brother that the daughter of Henry Dogett was in her *right* age for marriage.[148] This practice of marrying women in an early age gave them about twenty years of productivity for children. Thus, as a rough generalisation, marriages were organised by kin as soon as possible, before women becomes nubile. In some cases

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[143] Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p. 21.
[144] See for example: *SLP*, no. 136.
[145] Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p. 23.
[146] McFarlane, *Marriage and Love in England*, p.171.
[147] Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p. 29.
[148] *SLP*, no. 176.

mothers were in difficult positions. On the one hand, their son or daughter had reached the age of marriage but, on the other hand, their husbands were away or were unwilling to accept that particular marriage, and so the decision of marriage was not taken easily. On October 5, in 1478, Elizabeth Stonor prays to her husband William Stonor for 'letting him (their son Betson) not forgotten'.[149] At the moment, William Stonor was away from home and Elisabeth Stonor wrote three letters to her husband mentioning their sons' marriage and at the end she used this expression for perhaps being more efficient.

That the marriages at an early age were dangerous because of 'economic considerations'[150] is not valid for the marriages of gentry families, and especially for the marriage of the eldest son of the family, because in the noble families economy for enduring life was not a valid or at least so much important problem when compared with the peasant families of the period. After all, the eldest son had the obvious advantage for the continuity of the family and, for this reason, naturally every economic means of the family was open to his service for the prosperity and welfare of the eldest son.

Religion and Marriage in 15th-Century England:

If one deals with the fifteenth century English gentry, the importance of the religious considerations cannot be omitted at any rate. Thus, another function of the family was naturally and related to the particular conditions of the period, to provide nursery and education of children either for life or Christian values and vocations.[151] Thus, as some have suggested, a typical English household was primarily a spiritual household and,

[149] *SLP.*, no. 229.
[150] O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships,* p. 23.
[151] Ibid., p. 59.

naturally, the relationships within it should have to be spiritual in character. As O'Day suggests:

> It was only in conduct books, of course, that the relevance of Christian values in human families was taught. Hugh Latimer, in mid-sixteenth-century England, emphasised the importance of the family of God to which all Christians belonged. The authority of Father God was stressed. He insisted that Christians have all acquired God's values which must permeate their lives in human families. When a Christian man and woman set up house together and have children there is no dispute about the values and norms of their household for they already share the 'pattern' of Christian family. These are values which never cast away, never grown out of, but which are passed on from generation to generation.[152]

Needless to say, for most part of the gentry families, religious considerations had a degree of importance. Christian education and the continuation of Christian values were at least in a degree important. While a particular person may or may not be interested in religion deeply, the Christian values were also one of the dominant ethical characteristics of fifteenth-century of England.[153]

If one asks what were these Christian values and how would they be applied to family life, the answer, as Latimer explained, is the 'armour of god' with which Christians must grid themselves against the assaults of the Devil in family life. Truth was the most important ethical good.[154] The second important virtue was justice between the members of the family.[155] To be just was defined as 'to give every man that which we

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[152] O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships,* p. 46.
[153] Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p. 29.
[154] O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships,* p. 47.
[155] Ibid., p. 46.

owe unto him':[156] the chief of the family had to be just to his wife, children, and servants. Thus, here is other evidence demonstrating that servants were too seen as members of family. The dominant ethics regulating service patronage relationship of the fifteenth-century England was still at work in regulating family relationships. Thus, perhaps primarily the 'justice' and, secondarily, the religious virtues shaped the basic dynamics of the society deeply. In order to better grasp the importance of family and marriage let us consider the view of O'Day:

> For what purpose should one marry? On order to multiply the children of God. What other purpose can one have? To remedy the disorders of concupiscence. What obligations does marriage confer? To unite with one another, and through charity, to support one another, patiently to bear one another, and all the pains of marriage: and to attain salvation by giving a holy education to one's children.[157]

Thus, the original meaning of the family was to provide communal responsibilities and obligations on the basis of merely religious considerations;[158] and, in terms of these concepts that a firm understanding of family ethics had been developed. Thus, as O'Day claims, today, since the individualism is so strong and it rules 'the fulfilment of individual potential', it is difficult to understand the exact meaning and function of family of later medieval England.[159] Obviously, once more, it should be stressed that this view is a generalisation and generalisations are always dangerous. The formal ethical basis may be the above mentioned view, but I am dubious as to what extent the considerations of 'worldly advancement' were concerned with the 'religious' and 'ethical' part of the marriages.

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[156]Ibid., p. 48.
[157]Ibid., p. 50.
[158]Ibid., p. 49.

Marriage and Kinship in Fifteenth-Century Gentry Correspondence:

Who should be allowed to form a household? The answer had importance not only for order within the local and national communities but also for the future of other members of a given 'family'. It might determine the continued subsistence of the father, mother and children left on the farm as well as the future marriageability of siblings.[160] The theoretical frame of marriage as it has come to modern England has evolved from the parts of Europe where the simple nuclear family was most common and where marriage led to the founding of new household.[161] Thus, in practice every member of the family dealt with the construction of the household and the acceptance of the new members to the family. The exception to this were the children of the family whose capacity of intelligence was below the limits because of their small age.

What made marriage business so complex is that the existence of loyalties to a clearly defined larger body of kinsmen was a current phenomenon for the society of fifteenth-century England. Instead of a single family there were many families in the life of a person. These were family of marriage and family of blood and the close or remote relatives of both. This relatively open relationship type increased the importance of social relationships outside of the family.[162] After all, each person once married belonged at least to two different nuclear families, one being his or her family of origin, and the second being his or her family of marriage and the union of which, at least in some

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[159]Ibid., p. 47.
[160] Ibid., p. 48.
[161] Ibid., p. 50.
[162] Houlbrooke, *The English Family,* p. 41.

circumstances brought about the social loyalties.[163] After marriage, each individual gained a secondary attachment to a new family of his or her spouse as well as securing the tie of his or her family of origin. In this circumstance, it is very probable that each family was tied up to various families simultaneously. And in this circumstance, things becomes more puzzled because this multiplicity of marriage makes the affinities more complex than one could easily imagine. If you become a member of a new family, it is highly probable that that new family had different ties of affinities with different members of the English gentry and lesser nobility. Thus, affinity ties become more and more complex in this respect and people who are in a position of deciding to whom their daughter or son have to marry have to be more careful than one can expect because unwanted affinities can be easily created with the unwanted people of the families of the time. Just like new affinities brought to the members new pride and honour, the opposite probability was also true. Thomas Mull in 1472 wrote to Thomas Stonor about a possible marriage of their relative underlying that this girl had a 'well name' and her worth was fairly good.[164] Thus, later medieval English gentry was well aware of this possibility.

In later medieval English society, being a member of a well-established or famous family brought the person pride and honour,[165] as it was the case in Thomas Mull's case, but this membership did not imply the existence of organic ties between the family members, bringing them under a loyalty whose survival pass beyond the interests of the individuals or nuclear families.[166] In almost every generation lands went to the

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[163] Rosenthal, *Patriarchy and Families of Privilege,* p.22.
[164] *SLP.*, no. 121, pp. 211-212.
[165] O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships*, p. 90.
[166] Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p. 42.

eldest son.[167] This led to two different gaps: one was between the chief of the family and his (or rarely her) descendants; the second was between that chief and his younger brothers and their descendants.[168] In order to prevent possible discussions to arise from this problematic case, many big landowners were generous for their younger sons.[169] However, interestingly, these gifts were depended on individual affection and preferences and the ability to accumulate resources instead of being consequences of some complex profit calculations.[170]

The most important rules regulating marriage practice comes from kinship.[171] For the above mentioned reasons, marriage choice of an individual is usually (and not always) determined by his or her parents before he or she became mature enough to give decisions. In Thomas Mull's case the decision was taken by himself.[172] After all, it was largely seen that the marriage of two persons was not simply a decision of living together,[173] but rather, it was an alliance made by two kins to unite, or make strong alliance,[174] and to share the pride and honour of the this two different families each other. Thus, it was seen very normal that the parents should decide about their children's marriage. In such a circumstance it is essential that the person should marry a 'suitable' person. Everyone agreed that their child had to marry a suitable person, and the definition of the suitable was not so much clear. In some cases wives decided about the marriage of

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[167] Rosenthal, *Patriarchy and Families of Privilege,* p. 25.
[168] Houlbrooke, *The English Family,* p. 44.
[169] O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships,* p. 37.
[170] Houlbrooke, *The English Family,* p. 41.
[171] McFarlane, *Marriage and Love in England,* p. 245.
[172] *SLP.*, no. 121 (pp. 211-2).
[173] McFarlane, *Marriage and Love in England,* p. 246.
[174] Ibid., p. 245.

their daughter or son. But the final decision had to be given by the father. In a letter written by Elizabeth Stonor to William Stonor on 22 October 1476, Elizabeth Stonor wants the permission of his brother William Stonor about the marriage of her son Betson.[175]

The royal administration of medieval England did not allow the society to take its own course and find its own balance in the formation of almost any social institution, and marriage was no exception. In later medieval England, there were widespread prohibitions concerning marriage.[176] In the decisions of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, impediments of consanguinity and affinity were regulated on the basis of the canonical computation.[177] In this respect, it was not possible for a person to marry his own or his wife's third cousin, or any closer relative. Moreover, rules of spiritual affinity prevented people of 'godparenthood' from marrying.[178] Thus, it is not surprising that in the Stonor letters and papers one does not see an example of possible marriage between close relatives.

The reciprocity of right and duty on the very basis of relationships were usually important for the late medieval England. The tradition of primogeniture was also shaped on the basis of this understanding of reciprocity of mutual right and responsibility. For England in the 1450s, it was a common view that while the eldest son had an obvious advantage for being the head of the family, this advantage of primogeniture brought him moral and material responsibilities as well. In 1465, for example, Agnes Paston used her eldest son's concern about his brethren as her condition for the continued bestowal of her

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[175] *SLP.*, no. 172 (pp.269-70).
[176] McFarlane, *Marriage and Love in England,* p. 245.
[177] Ibid., p. 247.
[178] McFarlane, *Marriage and Love in England,* p. 248.

blessings for him. She told to him that they would on their part work on his behalf as hard as they could.[179] Naturally, many eldest sons tried to do their best to increase the profits of their siblings. In the Paston and Stonor correspondences, we find loyal younger brothers performing service to their eldest as a return.[180]

While, on the one hand, the ties between the eldest son and siblings rested stronger ever for this reason, the ties between siblings became weakened gradually. The most obvious reason for this seems the deaths of the heads of the families and older members of the families in general. Apparently, the deaths undermined the solidarity. There were some parents who did their best to secure and make up that solidarity again.[181] They tried to gather all the members of the family together regularly. They remained them of their obligations to each other as being the member of the same family. They informed them from each others' doings. Elizabeth Stonor is a good example for this kind, each time her husband went abroad, she gave very detailed information about what happened to the members of the society, and about major dealings of the family, such as visits of outsiders either servants or notables or various kinds of money dealings, and her style is so smooth that one thinks that she tries to make her best for supporting the solidarity of her family.[182]

Marriage created a new sense of family for the married. His or her new family was the person whom he or she had married and not the old family at all.[183] The main concentration of the married person was on his new family. Most important of all,

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[179] *PL*, no. 212.
[180] *SLP*, I, nos. 149, 158, 159, 161, *PL*, I, pp. 43-44.
[181] McFarlane, *Marriage and Love in England*, p. 20.
[182] See for example *SLP* nos. 168, 169, 170, 172, 173,175, 176.
[183]Rosenthal, *Patriarchy and Families of Privilege*, pp. 151-3.

new family meant new loyalty.[184] In August 1478 John Paston II wrote to his younger brother John III complaining that John did not alert him of a possible challenge to a piece of family patronage. As he said: ' I mervayle that ye sente me no worde ther-off; butt ye haue nowe wyffe and chylder, and so moche to kare fore thatt ye forgete me'.[185] In an age when loyalty was above everything, the family crisis was obviously harder to solve than it is today. For loyalty, the family of origin was secondary when compared to the family of marriage. Thus, in late medieval England, it is possible to group gentry families into basically two types: one being the family of origin, and the second being the family of marriage. The intriguing question that in an age where everything was determined by blood and loyalty, the question why people preferred their family of marriage over their family of origin is not easy to answer.

In later medieval England, childhood period was divided into two parts. One was up to the age of seven and the second was from seven until puberty.[186] Close and gentle care was believed appropriate in the first stage. In baptism it was claimed that the parents should secure their child from fire, water and other perils until child reaches to the age of seven.[187] The age of seven was considered the crucial point for the physical and mental development of the child.[188] It was at this period that the second set of teeth emerged and this led to the belief that the child could differ wrong from right, that is to say, his or her judgement was set properly.[189] As a consequence, it was believed that by

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[184] Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p. 151.
[185] *PL*, II, p. 44.
[186]Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p. 150.
[187]Ibid., p. 149.
[188]Ibid., p. 146.
[189]Ibid., p. 152.

the age of seven child was capable of committing mortal sin and crime.[190] As for the relationship between child(s) and parents, first of all it is possible to claim that there were an important amount of parental interest in children's welfare and progress in the period of education in school, either in neighbourhood or further afield. The physical remoteness of the child did not diminish parental concern at all. However, the solicitude was also the case for that period. This is implicit in the Edmund Stonor's record for his young son's recovery from illness in around 1380s. Brother Edmund wrote to Edmund de Stonor:

> Domine et deo devote, noveritis, si placet, me vidisse filium vestrum Edmundum, et statum Suum per duas noctes et diem considerasse: cujus infirmitas decrescit modicum distemperatus non per duas horas, post quas surgit, et, sugid exigit temptus, intrat scolas, et comedit et spaciatur sanus et jocundus, ita quod nullum periculum in eo videtur.[191]

In fact, the boy was happy and healthy enough, he had remembered himself to his mother and father without being reminded, and he had started to learn Latin. The father and mother wanted some of the clothes of the boy to be sent back home.[192]

In England, patriarchy was a matter of precept and pragmatism rather than law.[193] Ecclesiastics and laymen joined to support the power of the father over his children, which was in most cases, the power of the property rather than the law court.[194] Among the land owner social groups, the hopes and fears of the father as the head of the family centered around the life of eldest son since he would naturally inherit his house

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[190]Ibid., p. 151.
[191] *SLP*, no. 30 (pp. 109-10).
[192]Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p. 151.
[193]Rosenthal, *Patriarchy and Families of Privilege*, p. 207.

and estate and carry on his line after his death. In this circumstance, naturally, the relationship between father and eldest son was a close relationship.[195] The father was believed to be responsible for preparing his eldest son as his heir along with the responsibilities by gradually taking him into his confidence. In 1472, Thomas Mull wrote his brother-in-law Thomas Stonor a letter which leads one to think that Stonor's relationship with his son William in his early twenties was not as close as it should in fact have been.[196]

It has been long claimed that marriage was the main means for easy advancement. So, families wanted to do whatever possible for their children. One of the easy ways of finding a person to marry their child was their friends and kinsmen and that they were expected to send news of deserving partners and to act as intermediaries in constructing possible ties between them.[197] Thomas Hampton of Kimble wrote in 1465 to his cousin Thomas Stonor, requesting him to take into consideration his daughters.[198] Moreover, Thomas Stonor wanted his son Betson to marry a girl of their own level. This girl was called Mistress Blounte. Nevertheless, it became a difficult task for him to convince his son about this marriage. He requested the help of their close friend Thomas Mull. Interestingly, Thomas Mull reported all what happened when they first met each other in a detailed way. As usual, when fathers had problems the duty to solve them was in their servant or in their close friends. Thomas Mull did his job quite well.[199]

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[194]O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships*, p. 53.
[195]Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p. 179.
[196] *SLP*, no. 123 (pp. 213-5).
[197] Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p. 47.
[198] *SLP*, no. 76 (pp. 158-9).
[199] Ibid., no. 124 (pp. 215-6).

However, acceptance was not guaranteed when a member of nobility wanted to marry a girl of his own standing. Refusal was also the case. Sometimes even for the families of influence one-sided romance did not find response. Refusal of marriage offer was current even for the Stonor family. In 1480, a paper written on behalf of Agnes Wydeslade for declining a marriage offer: 'Whare at the departyr of your lordship, my maytresse promise was to conclude with no man in marriage in to the tyme she badde pute your lordship in knowlychyche...'[200]

It is a well-known fact that property, status, social and political connections worldly advancement all affected the marriage decisions of fifteenth century England, but for the Plumptons as a gentry family, the case does not fit with the current expectations.[201] The position of Sir William Plumpton (1404-80) was considered different from Stonor and Paston families. The Plumptons had 'a distinct penchant for contracting child marriages, for girls under the age of twelve and boys who had not reached fourteen'.[202] Obviously, in these circumstances, where individual freewill was not well-established, the individual concerns about marriage decision making was not possible at all. Sir William Plumpton's own marriage was decided by his parents in 1416 but he was (as some think) an individualist and hedonist, he had no concern about his formal wife.[203] For his children he did not find any possibility to arrange their marriages. For example the marriage of his own daughter Elizabeth Stapleton is an example to this

[200] Ibid., no. 261 (pp. 355-6).
[201] Dockray, 'Why did the Fifteenth-Century English Gentry Marry?', pp. 65-75.
[202] Ibid., p. 68.
[203]Ibid., pp. 65-75.

view.[204] Apart form this, the marriage of Edward Plumpton to Anges Drayate is also a marriage that no parental concern is the case.[205]

It is also convincing to argue that a degree of individualism in the marriage decisions of lesser nobility and gentry of the later medieval England was current. In this respect the position of the Church concerning individual consent and marriage is worthy of mention. By the end of the twelfth century, the medieval Western Church accepted the view that matrimonial bond was created by the consent of the couple themselves.[206] The family status, property or politics were not important at all, or they were of secondary importance from the point of view of the Church. Yet, obviously, one cannot expect the Church to say that children should go against their parent's decisions. Thus, the church implicitly encouraged that children should have to go in accordance with their parent's views concerning marriage. As Keith Dockray has suggested:

> The Church of course, did not encourage young men and women to go against the wishes of their parents,...if they did so, and if they could demonstrate that there existed a valid matrimonial bond between them (which could be achieved by the simple words 'I take you as my husband'/ 'I take you as my wife' even if said in private without the presence of a cleric), then no amount of parental complaint or pressure was likely to cut much ice with the ecclesiastical authorities.[207]

In addition to that, if the woman and man claimed that there had been a pressure to force them to make matrimony against their wishes, the marriage was seen as invalid.[208] This point gave a considerable advantage for the individuals in question to

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[204] Ibid., p. 66.
[205] Ibid., p. 67.
[206] Ibid., p. 65.
[207] Ibid., pp. 63-4.
[208] Ibid., pp. 65-75.

marry to the persons that they have individual affection and love. Considerations such as wealth, social status or property, in this circumstance, played no or only a secondary role.

Perhaps the most important of all, I should mention that marriage practice in fifteenth-century England was merely and very frequently a 'matter of business', instead of being a love affair between young people.[209] The most interesting examples is from again Thomas Mull. In a letter to Thomas Stonor, in May 1472, Thomas Mull, gives a list of what a goodly gentlewoman to whom cousin Thomas Mull wanted to mary had in her possession. This gentlewoman was Margery Etchingham, daughter of Sir Thomas Etchingam and she married Willam Blount son of Walter Blount who was killed at Barnet in 1471. Thomas Mull gives a fairly detailled description of woman's possessions and he does not forget to add that this woman had a good worship and she was well-named.

> Lykith you to wete that my Cosen Willyam hath ben with full goodly Gentilwoman, and comynde with her after love's lore: and for certain I knowe that ych of them ys verely well content of other. Shee was late wyf unto the son of my lorde Montjoy: and for the content what my cosen shall have with her, yf God provide for them that they shall go throwe in marriage suer yt is that of her ffather's enheritaunce she hath in possesion C. marks of lande, and after the deth of her ffather shee shall have over that the half of all the residue of al the lande of her ffather, and of my lorde Mountjoyes lande shee hath iiijxx marchs of annuite fe by dede endendid, for wher the lande was in value C. marchs shee hath layn it ayen to my seid lorde for yelding her yerly iiijxx marchs. ...and for certeine shee is well named and worshipful disposicion.[210]

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[209]McFarlane, *Nobility of Later Medieval England*, ch.8.
[210] *SLP*, no. 121, (pp. 211-212).

As Thomas Mull was a brother-in-law of Thomas Stonor, that is to say since he is quite close to him, he explicitly says anything. Normally, in most of the letters people cannot be so open. Obviously, this girl was a good candidate for the family.

While most of the marriages of fifteenth-century English gentry aimed worldly advancement, there were different cases either. First of all, we have examples of marriage of gentry families based on merely love relationship. At last John Paston II believed that his younger brother's marriage with Margery Brews in 1477 was for this reason.[211] In addition, while marriage was mostly a business act, 'love' was a matter to be considered at that period as well. However, the case is that there had been different meanings of 'love' from simple friendship to 'passionate mutual absorption'. It is true that love was seen as an essential element of the marriage, but the question of what type of love was the case is open to discussion.[212]

It was also believed that mutual affection was easy to attain if the partners were properly chosen.[213] In this belief, the role of affection before the marriage was not important at all. But even at this circumstance, at least a small degree of harmony between partners was necessary for the development of a good marriage relationship. In 1467, Thomas Rokes and Thomas Stonor agreed upon a marriage between two of their children. It was said that the agreement should be void if the children disagreed when the boy was fourteen and the girl was thirteen years old.[214]

It has been also suggested that four main criteria governed the choice of marriage of the period. They were respectively: the advancement of the individual or the

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[211] *PL*, II, p. 83.
[212] Colin Richmond, 'The Pastons Revisited: Marriage and the Family in Fifteenth-Century England', *Bulletin of the Institute for Historical Research*, 58 (1985), pp. 33-4.
[213] Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p. 76.

family; the ideal of parity; the character of the proposed partner; and, the personal affection or love.[215]A suitable marriage in this respect, especially among the members of the privileged class, was one which gave the individual and his or her kinsmen all these four points at the same time. Thus, it seems to be more proper to claim that the main marriage paradigm of the period was not simply being a business, but a harmony of these above mentioned four elements.

After all, 'material substance' was always seen as a very important consideration.[216] A father's available resources to provide for the rest of his children often depended on his heir's conduct in making the most advantageous marriage available to him. This view can be seen clearly in a document like the will of Thomas Stonor (d. 1431) who wished the proceeds of the sale of his son's marriage to be used to marry his five daughters.[217]

Marriage was merely functional rather than psychological.[218] Just like the service relationship, the marriage strategies of the noble families aimed at maximum benefit. Intense calculations took place on the part of the families of the candidates of the marriage.[219] The most prominent aim was to preserve or increase the strength of the family for the future. Gaining control of the target lands, important offices, and naturally, individual fortunes were the main aims of the nobility. This distinct social phenomenon created its gainers and losers: the gainers were the families' eldest sons who socially, became more respected after the marriage, or gained more control over their home

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[214] *SLP,* no.89 (pp. 183-4).
[215] Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p. 73.
[216]Ibid., p. 74.
[217] *SLP,* no. 54 (pp. 135-7).
[218] Richamond, 'The Pastons Revisited', pp. 33-34.
[219] McFarlane, *Marriage and Love in England,* p. 25.

families' estates and the fathers who, at least partially, lost control over their family after their eldest son married.[220]

In case of complete abolition of individual concerns for their marriage and seeing this particular relationship just like the other business proposition necessarily brought some complications. There are examples of individuals who did not find what they expected from marriage.[221] On the other hand, it has been also suggested that the marriage practice of the century was a matter of tacit agreement aiming to satisfy the needs of the community, families and the individuals as a whole. Every part had its own expectation from one's marriage.[222] The family of the married people expected to increase their worth, to acquire more land and fortune, and that thier son's or daughter's marriage be accepted by the community.

The community expected that marriages should have occurred according to the basic traditions of the society such as every person should marry according to his or her rank, and that the values of the noble class should have to be re-created and legitimised through the marriages. Furthermore, individuals wanted to fulfil their desires and live romances with their lovers. Thus, marriage took place as a composite move reconciling all the needs of all the parts of the society.[223] Sometimes daughters and sons rejected the views of their parents for all price. Usually, and interestingly, the sons and daughters were in conformity with what their parents thought about their own destiny.[224]

It is also important to note that the marriage 'strategies' when they were the case in most of the circumstances were not individual calculations of parents. They were

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[220] Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p. 11.
[221] McFarlane, *Marriage and Love in England,* p. 30.
[222] Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, pp. 15-8.
[223] This idea can be found partly in: Houlbrooke, *The English Family,* esp ch.5.

not simply the innocent hopes of the parents for the good of their children. The strategies were team-works. Many kinsmen worked for the 'good' of their child. Support of one member of the family was also needed from another member of the close relatives. Consider the letter written by William Stonor to Thomas Stonor in 1473.

> My ryght reverent and wurschypfull fadyr, I recomaund me unto your good fadyrhod yn the most umbyll wyse that I kan or may, mekely besechyng your fadyrhod of your dayly blessyng: lykyth your fadyrhod to wyt that my modyr·ys in good hele, and alle my brethern and susters, blessyd be alle myty Jhesu: and I beseche your good fadyrhod not to be dysplesyd with me for Feyrmers mater, for I never medyld odyrs wise but told Sawnder, that that dede that he shewyd me shulde be to the womans tytyl after my conseytt: and by my trowth, fadyr, that that ys feld was don ere I knowyt: but fadyr, there is notyng caryd, nether shalle nat be with the grace of alle myty Jhesu, hom I mekely beseche to preserve your good fadyrhod Amen I-wrytyn.[225]

There had been some good marriages too. At least formally we have to admit this when considering the sayings of Thomas Betson to Katherine Ryche in 1476. Note that Katherine married to Thomas when she was fifteen years old Thomas married her, and the following year she was pregnant and when Thomas died they had already five children. At that time she was twenty-two. Thomas's letter to her while they were engaged to be married is so delicate that it may be claimed that a forgery is plausible.[226] In fact, the artificiality of language usage leads one to think that this marriage, too, was at least at the beginning a 'marriage of business'. A third person, possibly one of Thomas

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[224] McFarlane, *Marriage and Love in England,* pp. 30-5.
[225] *SLP*, p. 221.

Betson's parents, may have manipulated the wording of the letter. However, forgery or not, they were happy after the marriage.

The letter from Thomas Stonor to his brother William Stonor written in 1474 is also another example showing that happy marriages took place in contrast to parent's decisions aiming at socio-political calculations. Obviously, in some cases accidental happiness can be found. The letter refers to Elisabeth Ryche, Stonor's first wife.

> Broder Stonar, after all dewe forme of recomendation hadde plesse hyt yow to hunderstonde that I never longed so sore to speke with you as I do now, marvellyng grettly that ye be longe hense, remembyrng how grettely in consette ye stonde in London with a gentylwoman, and the grette labore that hys made for here agynes you: and grettely hyt hys nossed and hasse bene tolde me with many persons that but ye be ware she shall be take from you. I here muche and sey no thyng: befor the laste tyme that ye where abowte suche a mater my speche and presens with you hurte you, and awelde you not: wherfore orlt ye to me a sewrte. I wolle in thys mater honsware no man, and yette I am gretteky question with for you of divers persons thynkyng that I shulde ken muche of your delyng: for I wolde mot for my horsse and harnes and all my oder goode that in thys mater ye toke a rebuke: wherefore remembre you shortely for the passion of gode for syth I cam to London...[227]

I believe that the main purpose of Thomas Stonor for writing this letter is to alert his brother that there were some rumours around and that his brother William should be on his guard. As Thomas uses an expression 'I here muche and sey no thyng'. He had heard something which may have been important but since he wanted to be careful, he did not want to say all that he heard to his brother. The crucial expression in this letter is that 'she shall be take from you'. This is the warning and, if William would not want to be with

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[226] The letter is too long to be mentioned here, the style of the letter is as I shall suggest passes beyond the limits of an ordinary romance of a lover. Ibid., pp. 262-4.

Elizabeth, Thomas would not have needed to alert his brother William. An undesired event may have happened: Elisabeth Ryche could have been removed from William. He had to be careful.

Marriage was seen as a strong alliance of the persons and of the families. It is also important to note that the gentry of late medieval England did not give so much importance to marriage without any reason. These strategies behind the marriages of the gentry family members signifies a latent desire to become a member of the class of the English nobility. This is, I believe, why the gentry was so willing to increase their political and financial power in every case. On the part of the approval of the community for a marriage of a couple, it shall be claimed that the general tendency of the society was as the dominant ethical value, to promote power and richness. In addition, the community wanted the continuation of the present order of the society by promoting and accepting the marriage of people of the same social class.

The actions of gentry families were generally in conformity with the values of the community of the time. The exception came from the energy of the youths. For them considerations such as power, land, money, or social status were of none or secondary importance. For the young persons who were to be married, the case was not so much connected with the adult calculations of power. The reason for this was not so much the claim that the gentry sons and daughters were so much concerned with love affairs. It should be mentioned that the average age of marriage at that time was very low. The couple were usually minors and were not concerned with anything. While their mind as a natural consequence of childhood was very open to the suggestions of their parents, the marriage was not their popular concern. They were generally not in an age of meeting

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[227] Ibid., pp. 236-7.

with love affairs. Their psychological mood was not ready to do it. Yet for the people who married in an older age, in a mature period, the political concentration was not so much strong and that the married couple were mostly concentrated in romance and in the fulfilment of some other psychological needs such as the need for friendship.[228]

Marriages between kin was another problematical practice. In some periods of time, there had been some prohibitions against the marriage between the kin.[229] However, the community did not prohibit it effectively. The value of the community did not go in accordance with legal practice. Even maybe the opposite is true. The society promoted the marriage between kin.[230] One thing is true that the divorce of the married members of the kin was a big problem.

If one asks why did fifteenth-century English aristocracy married, the simple answer to this question will be that there was no single reason. It is mostly correct that fifteenth-century English gentry and lesser nobility were in quest of advancement either economically and hierarchically. Marriages of the time represented worldly advancement for the noble and gentry families. We know from the service relationships of the time that sometimes for the members of the noble families the worth of a man (namely 'his worship') is more important than money or even land. One inevitably thinks that the marriage practice of the time should be affected from this value. The members of the aristocracy should more or less, implicitly or explicitly think about the relationship between the possible marriage of their daughter or son and their degree of 'worship' they will probably yield on the eyes of the community. In a society where every relation was

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[228] Richmond, 'The Pastons Revisited', pp. 41-2.
[229] Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p. 8.
[230] Ibid., p. 9.

based on service in a finely hierarchical order, it is not surprising at all. Hierarchy determined almost everything.

This is perhaps one of the important reasons why community accepted the marriage of the social equals and rejected that of unequals. Perhaps service relationship would be harmed when the marriage of a daughter of a lord to the son of a server would took place. In this case, it would be inevitable that the authority of the lord be damaged. Moreover, nobles cared for their families in every respect. Remember for example the case of Thomas Stonor when his son was ill, or the case of Elizabeth Stonor, as she informed about everything their family did when her husband Thomas Stonor was away. This is perhaps for this high level of care that noble families took the marriage decisions of their children themselves. They mostly needed the good of their children at the future.

After all, marriage, like other elements of the community was a part of the politics of the families. It was assumed that freedom can be attained by means of political power not by means of cutting or feebling the ties that limit individuals. Thus, the social existence of individuals as distinct elements of the society was of their secondary concern. Nevertheless, a quest of harmony between individual and family was the case, especially for the sons and daughters whose age was older.

Chapter IV:
Conclusion

Service and patronage on the one hand, and marriage and families on the other were two major components of fifteenth-century English nobility society. I have started my analysis by asking how did the affinities of fifteenth century emerged. Obviously this question is highly difficult to answer. However, if one understands the basic nature of service and patronage relationship of the society, a convincing but not complete answer may be given. From top to bottom, that is to say from king to the lowest gentry members, every man founded with each others organic ties whose existence mostly depended on functional basis. The origin of this practice comes from the king. Naturally, the power of king was not absolute and, in some cases, kings needed the help of some notables for some important royal affairs. In addition to that, kings needed help in daily life. This is the ideal form of 'household'. King had households, normally, since noblemen had to have similar lifestyle with king, then they had to have the households too. The relationship between household and family is obvious. In fact, there are examples that their meaning covered each other. In some cases, these ties emerging from household membership were so close that some noblemen called their servants their son. Because in most cases their servants were important for them. Just as kings had some jobs to be done, so noblemen had some jobs to be done either inside or outside of the household, and from this simple point that the functionality of service and patronage relationship becomes obvious. If the functionality of service and patronage relationship is its most fundamental characteristics for its existence, the second important point for its existence was that it was a symbol of worth for every noblemen of the time.

In the fifteenth century, one can see various forms of marriage practice in every social strata of the society. The gentry class is not exceptional. While, on the one hand, one can conclude that there were some general patterns of marriage as the dominant model and trend of marriage practice of gentry class, gentry families in fact, had almost all forms of marriage: marriage of love, of romance, of money, of parents decisions etc. In some cases they got what they wanted and in some cases they could not. The refusal of Thomas Stonor is a good example for this.

When considering the general trends of the society, such as worldly advancement either economically or hierarchically, this variety of forms of marriage may seem to be interesting. In a world where the dominant ethics would be the worldly advancement, such a variety of marriage forms may have not been usual. Yet, after all, one should remember that the period was a transition period and society was gradually becoming more complex in its basic structures. Naturally, the more society becomes complex, the more new forms of social relationships would emerge. The most natural consequence of this emergence of this new forms of social and economic relationships is the diversification of social and economic relationships. Perhaps this same phenomenon made the service-patronage relationship available in that period and non-available today.

The relationship between family or 'families' and marriage is also important to note. It is especially in this point that the connection between marriage and affinities becomes apparent. When a nobleman marries, he or she definitely would have two families. These are the families of blood and the family of marriage. In this circumstance, in some cases people had been in a position to choose between these two families

because, as one family was in favour of an affinity, the other family was in favour of another affinity. In these circumstances people usually choose their family of marriage.

I have attempted to analyse two main components of a particular group of the English society in the fifteenth century. These are the service-patronage relationships and marriage practice. What I have suggested, roughly speaking, is that these two modes of relationship were firmly integrated with each other, and that they were similar in their 'teleological' aspects. That is to say, these two practices while they may be different in their scope and irrelevant to one another, were both influenced by similar trends and similar aims, being the same type of reflections of the main motives of ethical values of the period. The most important of these ethical values was aiming at worldly advancement in economic and social respects.

The expectations of worldly advancement were economic, in that members of the fifteenth-century English gentry aimed to get economic profit in return for the service or patronage they have done, and the marriage they arranged for their sons and daughters for the upper class members of the society. But, it should be noted here that, the term economic is used in its widest sense. Economic profit may not simply mean the profit in the cash form. In fact, profit, having mostly an economic side, had various meanings in fifteenth century.

These economic profits may also be in different forms. They may be direct or indirect. The economic profit may be direct if it has a short term return to the sides, or it may be indirect if it has a long term return to the sides. The returns may most probably be in the form of direct land grant which was a short term profit or indirect aid in an important and big deal such as making necessary talks to necessary people in a court

procedure or giving promise in grant of special hierarchically important position which in this time having long term effect.

To reduce the major aspects of the fifteenth century English gentry society to a single form of behaviour, ie. aiming at worldly advancement, may seem to be an oversimplification; and, while this is partly true, I shall suggest that this reduction, a better and useful, if not the best, way of stressing the main characteristics of this particular society. Thus, this simplification should be rather seen as a rough but efficient description of a particular society instead of being an attempt to explain all the social dynamics of that a complex society with a single dynamics. Thus, the place of the term worldly advancement in explaining the fifteenth-century English gentry is in its functionality in stressing the major characteristics of the society.

A typical English gentleman of fifteenth century was in a twofold position in managing his expenditures in accordance with the particular values of his time. On the one hand, he was forced to make as much expenditure as possible; on the other hand, his resources was not unlimited and they had to be managed as efficiently as possible. This expenditure strategy had to be applied in almost every part of life from decorating the house and giving glamourous meals to managing household expanses to his servants.

As a part of my study, I have primarily focused on 'household' strategies of the gentry families since service and patronage relationship was merely based on that existing households, and I have suggested that 'the unwisdom of making too large a household' was recognised by a part of the society. But this awareness of one group implies the existence of another group of gentry families spending almost everything they had on their servers in order to show the other part of the society that they were powerful

enough to spend important amounts of money to their servers. That is to say, this 'unwisdom' was usual practice for another part of the society. Since, if the practice of having too large a household had not existed, then no one would have mentioned this practice in his letter to his friends.

Members of the gentry families were in a way obliged to make great expenditure on their household members ie. servants simply because their 'worship' ie social worth and prestige was merely dependent on the greatness of their household scale qualitatively and quantitatively. Again, the reason for this is obvious, because the dominant ethic of the age was based on glamour and wealth and the demonstration of it in efficient manner.

Members of gentry families had to choose their servants from important and powerful persons because in some cases the service they needed required special ability or special power. For example, a man of commonalty could not have aided a master in a court procedure as efficiently as a prestigious person could do. For the existence of these kinds of particular jobs, it was unwise to construct the household with many people without having special ability or power. The greatness of the household in number thus was not the only point to be considered in making household. This kind of a greatness of household, ie. greatness in number, would bring to its owner the influence and recognise that his household was the biggest in the realm and that he was a powerful person and nothing else and more. Thus, the quality was also important. The physical service the master would have attained from this kind of a household would be great but it would only be limited to physical service and nothing more. This was the first reason why

families of the fifteenth-century English gentry tried to get men of influence in their household.

Another reason why the gentry members took men of influence in their household was that the greatness of the household members of a master would naturally show the greatness of that master. For this reason, gentry members tried to construct their household bodies from as powerful persons as possible. The more was the power and worth of the servant the more was the worth and prestige of the master having that servant under his household. Thus, this practice made the service and patronage relationship even more important and more common. Every gentry member was a master of his household and a servant of another higher master. In this way, the structure of mastership and servantship penetrated every part of gentry life and gave the society an order of its own by imposing its own unique practice and values.

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